

PANZER III



GERMAN ARMY LIGHT TANK
NORTH AFRICA
EL ALAMEIN TO TUNIS, 1942-1943



Dennis Oliver





This PzKpfw III ausf L, Fahrgestelle number 74171, was assembled by the Berlin firm of Alkett between April and October 1942. The frame for the Vorpanzer armour has been welded to the gun mantlet but the front plate has not been fitted. Note the use of lengths of track and sandbags for added protection. This tank was almost certainly assigned to Panzer-Regiment 5 and was photographed in southern Tunisia.

TankCraft 40

PANZER III

GERMAN ARMY LIGHT TANK

NORTH AFRICA

EL ALAMEIN TO TUINIS, 1942-1943

Dennis Oliver

Contents

Introduction

The North African Campaign 1942-1943

The Pzkwfw III Units

Camouflage & Markings

Model Showcase

Modelling Products

Technical Details and Modifications

Kriegsstärkenweisung and Orders of Battle

Product Contact Details

Front cover. At top: Kentaro Takabayashi's Pzkwfw III ausf Nin 1/35 scale built and painted to represent a vehicle of 2. Kompanie, Panzer-Regiment 8. The photographs in the centre depict, from left to right, a Pzkwfw III ausf N of Stab, schwere Panzer-Abteilung 501 operating in Tunisia in late 1942 or early 1943. A Pzkwfw III ausf M of an unidentified unit disabled and abandoned outside Tunis in May 1943. A Pzkwfw III ausf L from Panzer-Regiment 7 of 10. Panzer-Division photographed in early 1943. The illustration at the foot of the page depicts a Pzkwfw III ausf J of 7. Kompanie, Panzer-Regiment 5 which took part in the fighting near El Alamein in late 1942. The colours used on these tanks are discussed in detail in the Camouflage & Markings and Technical Details and Modifications sections of this book.

First published in Great Britain in 2023 by Pen & Sword Military

An imprint of Pen & Sword Books Ltd
47 Church Street, Barnsley, South Yorkshire, S70 2AS
Copyright © Pen & Sword Ltd, 2023
Artwork copyright © Dennis Oliver

ISBN 978 1 39906 512 2
Epub ISBN 978 1 39906 513 9
Mobi ISBN 978 1 39906 513 9

The right of Dennis Oliver and Oliver Publishing to be identified as the Authors of this work has been asserted by them in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

A CPI catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical including photocopying, recording or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission from the publisher in writing.

Pen & Sword Books Ltd incorporates the Imprints of Pen & Sword Military, Pen & Sword Family History, Pen & Sword Maritime, Pen & Sword Aviation, Pen & Sword Discovery, Wharncliffe Local History, Wharncliffe True Crime, Wharncliffe Transport, Pen & Sword Select, Pen & Sword Military Classics, Leo Cooper, The Praetorian Press, Remember When, Seaforth Publishing and Frontline Publishing.

For a complete list of Pen & Sword titles please contact
PEN & SWORD LIMITED 47 Church Street, Barnsley, South Yorkshire, S70 2AS,
England

E-mail: enquiries@pen-and-sword.co.uk Website: www.pen-and-sword.co.uk

In early November 1942, as the tanks of the Deutsches Afrikakorps were withdrawing from El Alamein, British and US Army formations landed in Morocco and Algeria, threatening to trap the German units that had been operating in North Africa since early 1941 and overrun Italy's colonial possessions.

But within 24 hours of the Allied landings the handful of Panzers retreating through Libya were reinforced with up-gunned and up-armoured models, including the 7.5cm armed Pzkwfw III ausf N and a few of the Pzkwfw III ausf M, the last tanks of the production series, as German troops poured into Tunisia. Although outgunned by the latest Allied tank, the US Army M4 Sherman, and somewhat overshadowed by the North African debut of the Tiger I, the Pzkwfw III was still the most important tank in the German army's arsenal, making up some three-quarters of the Axis tank strength during Operation Frühlingswind, the series of German attacks around Kasserine, perhaps the most celebrated of the Tunisian battles.

In *Tankcraft 36: Panzer III German Army Light Tank, North Africa Tripoli to El Alamein, 1941-1942*, we examined the versions of the tank that took part in the early years of the campaign, most concentrating on the Pzkwfw III ausf G, ausf H, and ausf J (1) with some mention of later versions, as these were the most commonly seen variants in North Africa up to the time of the battles around El Alamein. In this book we look at the units which took part in the last stages of the North African campaign and the versions of the Pzkwfw III that came into service during 1942 and the models which saw the end of the tank's production run in 1943. To cover these accurately some repetition was necessary and I hope the reader will forgive this.

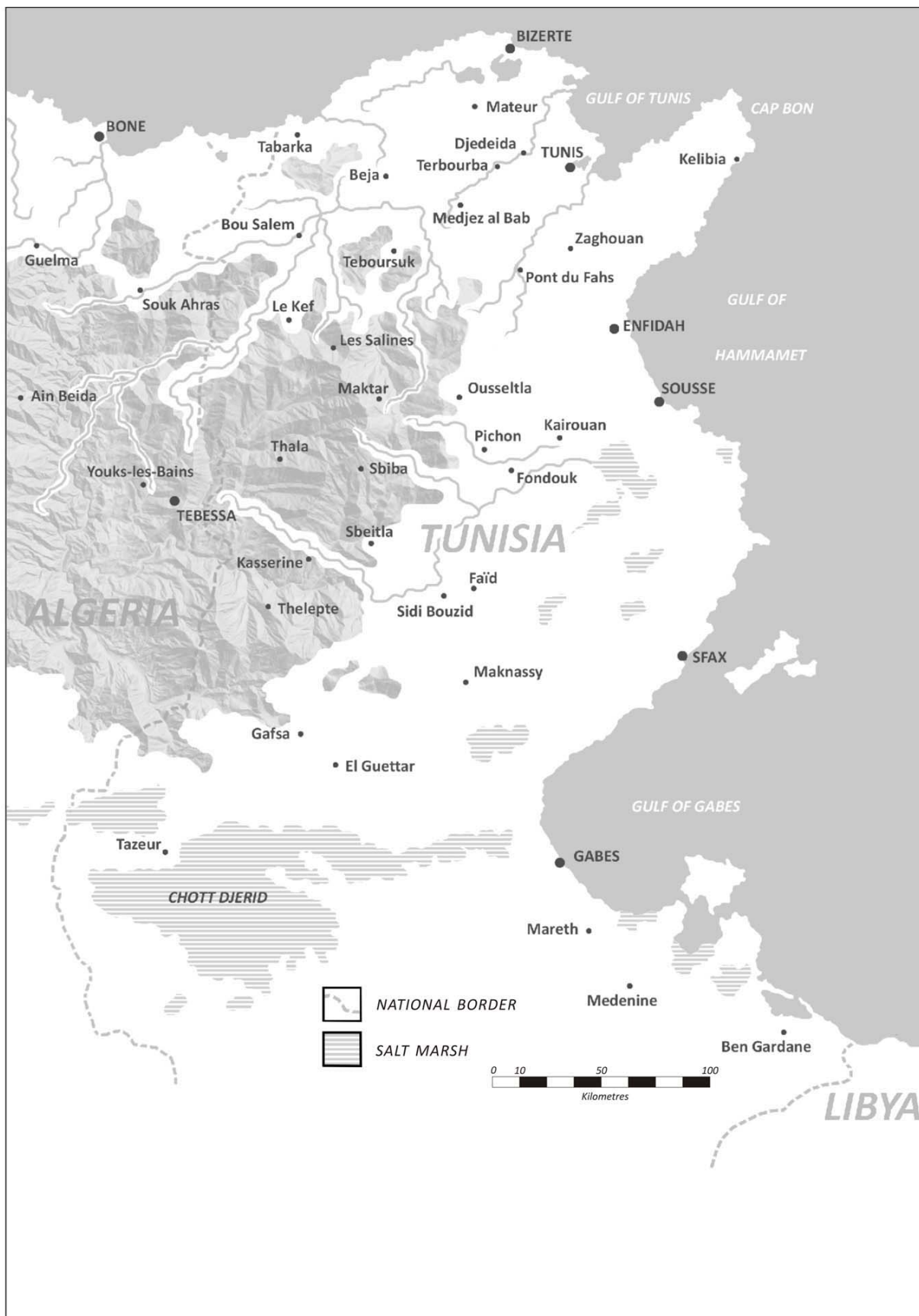
A number of large battles and countless skirmishes were fought in the last months of the campaign through western Libya and in Tunisia and a book of this size could not possibly hope to examine those engagements in detail. However, the timeline on the following pages and the accompanying map will hopefully give the reader an idea of where the action took place and some understanding of this important phase of the war as it affected the Panzer units and the part played by the Pzkwfw III tank.



A Pzkw III ausf J of 7. Kompanie, Panzer-Regiment 5 photographed in southern Tunisia in early 1943. Other images taken from the same series show the company number 733 painted on the rear of the turret stowage box and this vehicle is also shown on [page 24](#) of the Camouflage ... Markings section of this book. Although the use of signal flags and pennants had been forbidden in late 1941 they are commonly encountered until the end of the fighting in May 1943.

Notes

1. The German term *ausführung*, which will be familiar to many readers of this series, can be translated here as model or type and is abbreviated as *ausf* throughout this book.



THE TUNISIAN BRIDGEHEAD. 1942-1943

In November 1942, with the retreat of Axis forces from El Alamein and the Allied landings in Morocco and Algeria, the focus of the North African campaign very quickly shifted to Tunisia. The country was, at that time, a French protectorate, as was Morocco, and sandwiched between these two was Algeria which was considered part of metropolitan France. Although the area was administered by the Vichy government, German and Italian bureaucrats had been based in French North Africa since the armistice of June 1940 and interfered in almost every aspect of governance. But there was no German military presence in any of the French possessions when the Allied landings took place and the closest Axis formation was an understrength Italian infantry division based in Tripolitania, the westernmost province of Italian Libya, close to the Tunisian border. As can be seen from our map, much of the Algerian-Tunisian frontier area is made up of mountains and river valleys while southern Tunisia is littered with salt marshes and these terrain features dictated the nature of much of the fighting. Many place names employed in histories of the North African campaign are in fact anglicised versions of Arabic words and phrases which can be seen on most modern-day maps but as these earlier versions are those with which most readers will be familiar they are used both here and in the following text. The national borders shown above are those of 1943. Throughout this book, purely as a matter of convenience, I have referred to Allied units as either British or American although Australian, New Zealand, Indian, South African, Polish, French, Czechoslovakian and Greek soldiers served with the anti-Axis forces.

The rapid build-up of German forces in Tunisia was aided by the ambivalence of the French command which, claiming neutrality, refused to deny the use of their airfields to either side. By 9 November 1942, just 24 hours after the initial landings, Allied intelligence was reporting the arrival of forty Luftwaffe transports at Tunis with a further sixty landing on the following day. By the end of the month two full Italian divisions and three German divisions, including the tanks of 10. Panzer-Division, had been flown in or ferried from Sicily and mainland Italy. The most important events of the campaign, as they relate to the Panzer units involved, are set out in the following timeline. The events prior to this are examined in *TankCraft 36: Panzer III German Army Light Tank North Africa, Tripoli to El Alamein, 1941-1942*.

2 November 1942. *After a number of diversionary attacks, the British launch Operation Supercharge, a major assault on the Axis positions*

around El Alamein in Egypt. That night, following a failed counterattack, Generalfeldmarshall Rommel requests permission from Hitler to fall back. The Führer forbids any retreat by Panzerarmee Afrika.

4 November 1942. *Rommel ignores Hitler's orders and prepares for a general withdrawal to the Libyan border, leaving a strong anti-tank screen as a rearguard.*

6 November 1942. *The remaining tanks of Panzer-Regiment 5 clash with British armoured units south-west of Sidi Haneish but manage to escape encirclement and reach Mersa Matruh, over 150 kilometres west of El Alamein.*

7 November 1942. *Despite the losses suffered in the previous day's fighting, Panzer-Regiment 5 holds off a strong British armoured force as the withdrawal continues.*

8 November 1942. *As Rommel's troops reach Sidi Barrani, 40 kilometres from the Libyan frontier, they are reinforced by the arrival of just six tanks of Panzer-Abteilung 190. On the same day Allied forces land in Morocco and Algeria as part of Operation Torch and the remainder of Panzer-Abteilung 190 is diverted to Bizerte in Tunisia.*

10 November 1942. *Allied forces in Algeria cross the Tunisian frontier. On the following day the last Axis troops leave Egypt.*

15 November 1942. *The Germans abandon Derna in Libya, while in the west British troops capture Tabarka in Tunisia and the Americans occupy the airfield at Youks-les-Bains in Algeria.*

17 November 1942. *At Djebel Abiod in Tunisia, the Allied forces in the west come into contact with German troops for the first time as the paratroopers of Kampfgruppe Witzig bring the British advance to a halt. That afternoon Witzig's men are reinforced by the tanks of Panzer-Abteilung 190.*

19 November 1942. *The Germans brush aside the French units defending Medjez al Bab in Tunisia.*

20 November 1942. *In Libya, British troops capture Benghazi. The tanks of 1. Kompanie, schwere Panzer-Abteilung 501 are loaded onto ferries for transport to North Africa.*

21 November 1942. *Kampfgruppe Witzig, supported by a handful of tanks from Panzer-Regiment 7 of 10. Panzer-Division, goes over to the attack at Djebel Abiod but are beaten back by heavy artillery fire.*

23 November 1942. *The Axis units in Libya abandon Ajdabiya. The first Tigers of schwere Panzer-Abteilung 501 arrive in Tunisia.*

26 November 1942. *An opportunistic Allied raid on the airfield at Djedeida convinces the German command that their defences have been broken and many units follow the order to retreat before it can be rescinded, allowing Medjez al Bab to fall into enemy hands.*



The presence of German Fallschirmjäger in other images from this series would suggest that this photograph was taken at some time after the fighting at Alam Halfa but probably before the launch of Operation Lightfoot, the British offensive of 23 October 1942. It is also likely that these vehicles are from Panzer-Regiment 5 of 21. Panzer-Division which was positioned to the rear of the paratroopers of Fallschirm-Brigade Ramcke. The tank closest to the camera is a Pzkw III ausf L, armed with the 5cm L/60 gun, the first of which began arriving in North Africa in July and August 1942. The other vehicle is a captured Marmon Herrington Mk III armoured car of South African manufacture which, for some reason, has had its turret removed.



A PzKpfw III ausf J or ausf L partially fitted with the Vorpanzer additional armour that was incorporated into production from as early as September 1941 and later issued to units in the field as an upgrade kit. Note that the sides of the hull plate and the front of the gun mantlet plate are not fitted, a common sight in North Africa. Delays caused by a shortage of hardened steel meant that it was March 1942 before the complete Vorpanzer mantlet assembly became standard. In any case, parts were often omitted or removed as it was felt that any increased protection did not compensate for the added weight.

28 November 1942. *A combined Allied force attempts to capture Djedeida but is beaten back with heavy losses.*

1 December 1942. *A counterattack by the tanks of 7. Panzer-Regiment pushes the British back from the area around Djedeida. Two days later the transports carrying most of the regiment's 5. Kompanie and 8. Kompanie are lost at sea.*

4 December 1942. German units, including tanks of Panzer-Regiment 7, capture Terbourba in Tunisia, claiming the destruction of 134 enemy tanks.

11 December 1942. The British launch an offensive toward Marsa al Brega and El Agheila in Libya in an effort to trap the retreating Panzerarmee Afrika.

13 December 1942. British troops near El Agheila are brought to a halt by the last tanks of the Italian Centauro Division.

18 December 1942. Axis forces in Libya continue their withdrawal, infiltrating the Allied lines under the cover of darkness and engaging in a brief firefight at Nawfaliya on the coast.

22 December 1942. A joint British-US offensive in Tunisia near Maknassy is driven back to its start point by the evening of the following day.

8 January 1943. Due to heavy losses at sea, convoys between Italy and Tripoli are suspended, further exacerbating the Axis supply difficulties.

18 January 1943. A Kampfgruppe made up from parts of a Gebirgsjäger regiment and four tanks, seizes the area around Djebel Mansour, east of the Siliana to Bou Aradah road, and secures a crossing of Lake Kebir in Tunisia.

23 January 1943. British 8th Army units capture Tripoli, the capital of Libya.

30 January 1943. The French garrison at Faïd Pass in Tunisia surrenders after a determined German assault.

4 February 1943. British units cross the Libyan border into Tunisia.

14 February 1943. German units, principally two Kampfgruppen from 21. Panzer-Division, launch an offensive near the town of Sidi Bouzid, between Sfax and Kasserine in Tunisia. An American counterattack is beaten back by the tanks of schwere Panzer-Abteilung 501.

15 February 1943. Further American counterattacks around Sidi Bouzid are repelled with heavy loss and on the following day the Germans enter the town and advance to Sbeitla.

19 February 1943. *The remaining tanks of Panzerarmee Afrika, retreating from the east, launch a surprise attack at Kasserine in Tunisia, overwhelming the American defenders.*

20 February 1943. *Although the Kasserine attack is successful, an assault at Sbiba to the north runs into strong resistance.*

21 February 1943. *Taking personal control of the tanks of Panzer-Regiment 7, Rommel pushes the Americans back toward Thala, north of Kasserine, potentially leaving the road to the Algerian border open.*

22 February 1943. *An Allied counterattack near Thala manages to halt the Germans.*

23 February 1943. *Heeresgruppe Afrika, under Generalfeldmarschall Erwin Rommel, is created to command all Axis ground forces in North Africa.*

26 February 1943. *As the fighting at Kasserine peters out, the Germans launch Operation Ochsenkopf, aimed primarily at gaining control of the area between the British 1st Army and Rommel's Heeresgruppe Afrika, known to the Allies as Hunt's Gap. Although initially successful, the German units are forced to withdraw into northern Tunisia after suffering heavy losses including seven Tigers of schwere Panzer-Abteilung 501.*

6 March 1943. *In an effort to delay the British attack on the Mareth Line in southern Tunisia, Heeresgruppe Afrika launches a preemptive strike towards Medenine codenamed Operation Capri. By the end of the first day, after losing more than fifty tanks, Rommel concludes that his forces are too weak and withdraws towards the north. Heavy rain over the next few days hampers the British pursuit.*

9 March 1943. *Generaloberst Hans-Jürgen von Arnim takes command of Heeresgruppe Afrika when Rommel returns to Germany.*

12 March 1943. *The first tanks of schwere Panzer-Abteilung 504 are unloaded in Tunis.*

17 March 1943. *US troops capture Gafsa in central Tunisia, north of the Chott Djerid lake. On the following day El Guettar, 20 kilometres to the south-east, falls to the Allies.*

19 March 1943. *The British launch a major assault against the Mareth Line and penetrate the German defences near Al Zar At on the coast.*

20 March 1943. *British units make further breakthroughs along the Mareth Line in southern Tunisia. To the north, schwere Panzer-Abteilung 504 goes into action for the first time near Maknassy, claiming the destruction of thirty-five Allied tanks in a single action.*

21 March 1943. *New Zealand units bypass the Mareth Line defences in Tunisia and force a passage through Wilder's Gap to the west, taking the German defenders on the Djebel Tebaga by surprise.*

22 March 1943. *A counterattack mounted by 15. Panzer-Division recaptures much of the ground lost to the British at Mareth.*

23 March 1943. *An assault by the tanks of 10. Panzer-Division near El Guettar in Tunisia is repulsed by concentrated anti-tank fire.*

26 March 1943. *Late in the evening, as part of Operation Supercharge II, British armoured units pour through the gap in the Mareth defences created on the previous day. Although 15. Panzer-Division makes a determined counterattack the Germans are forced back to Wadi Akarit.*



Tanks from Panzer-Regiment 7 of 10. Panzer-Division photographed in Tunisia, probably in early December 1942, before the division took part in the fighting at Kasserine. Note the division's bison insignia on the rear of the Rommleiste stowage box to the left of the company number. Note also the very small number 1 on the hull rear plate to the right of the filler cap which may be either the platoon or individual vehicle number. A Pzkw III tank of this company is shown on [page 19](#) of the Camouflage ... Markings section of this book.



The first heavy tank battalions, including the units sent to North Africa, were organised with a mix of Tiger I and Pzkw III light tanks. All those allocated to schwere Panzer-Abteilung 501 were the Pzkw III ausf N version armed with the 7.5cm L/24 gun as shown here. Many, but not all, were fitted with the smoke dischargers on the turret side. Note the Vorpanzer armour on the hull front and the battalion's colourful unit insignia on the turret side just below the company number. The markings of this tank are shown and discussed on [page 20](#) of the Camouflage ... Markings section and the organisation of the Tiger battalions that served in Tunisia are examined on [page 63](#).

27 March 1943. The tanks of 15. Panzer-Division stop the British advance in front of Al Hammah but New Zealand units maintain control of the area to the south of the town.

31 March 1943. In northern Tunisia British troops occupy Cap Serrat on the Tunisian coast. The Italian garrison on Hill 369 near El Guettar holds

out against several American attempts to take the position. German units in southern Tunisia withdraw into hastily prepared defences at Wadi Akarit.

6 April 1943. *German and Italian units at Wadi Akarit begin falling back towards Enfidah as British 8th Army divisions start to make contact with American units. Similarly, the German defenders around El Guettar withdraw towards the north.*

7 April 1943. *British and American troops link up on the El Guettar to Gabès road.*

9 April 1943. *British troops capture Al Maharas and on the following day advance to Sfax, which has been abandoned by the Germans.*

11 April 1943. *Allied troops take Kairouan on the road to Tunis and on the next day capture Sousse on the coast.*

20 April 1943. *British troops capture the airfield at Enfidah although German troops hold out in the surrounding area for some time. On the following day New Zealand troops capture the village of Takrouna just north of Enfidah.*

22 April 1943. *A concerted Allied effort to defeat the remaining Axis forces in Tunisia begins but the stubborn German defence allows the Luftwaffe to begin the evacuation of Axis units.*

23 April 1943. *The tanks of 3. Kompanie, Panzer-Regiment Hermann Göring, which had arrived in North Africa earlier in the month, engage Allied units for the first time.*

26 April 1943. *The remaining tanks of schwere Panzer-Abteilung 504 destroy more than twenty Allied armoured vehicles in a defensive action along the Oued Medjerda, east of the Tunis to Bizerte road.*

29 April 1943. *The Germans fall back to the area west of Bizerte while two Italian naval infantry regiments act as a rearguard.*

3 May 1943. *US troops capture Mateur south of Lake Ichkeul. The fighting around Medjez al Bab continues.*

4 May 1943. *The Luftwaffe evacuation is completed.*

6 May 1943. *British troops capture the city of Tunis while on the following day the Americans enter Bizerte unopposed. In the fighting along the northern coast 15. Panzer-Division is almost completely destroyed. An Allied naval blockade seals off Tunisia from the sea.*

13 May 1943. *Pushed into the Cap Bon peninsula, the remaining Axis troops surrender after firing off the last of their ammunition and destroying their equipment.*

For much of 1941 and 1942 the German armoured force in North Africa consisted of the tanks of Panzer-Regiment 5, from 21. Panzer-Division, and Panzer-Regiment 8 of 15. Panzer-Division and the early history of these formations is examined in *TankCraft 36: Panzer III, German Army Light Tank, North Africa Tripoli to El Alamein 1941–1942*. As early as mid-1942 Hitler had promised Panzerarmee Afrika a complete Tiger battalion, once it had been fully equipped, and a Panzer-Abteilung which was to reinforce 90. Afrika-Division. The latter began forming in August 1942, but it would not leave Germany for some time. Of more immediate benefit were the seventy-six Pzkw III and twenty Pzkw IV, the latter all armed with the long-barrelled 7.5cm L/43 gun, which arrived in North Africa in July and August 1942. But the events which spurred the substantial build-up of Axis forces in North Africa were the Allied landings in Morocco and Algeria in the following November and the withdrawal through what were at the time the Italian colonies of Cyrenaica and Tripolitania that took place at the same time. This was also a time of organisational change and attempts were made to upgrade the veteran African divisions to the establishments introduced in Europe in early 1943 but it is doubtful that any changes were actually achieved. The campaign in North Africa was a war of Kampfgruppen, or ad-hoc battle groups, and the new arrivals of late 1942 and early 1943 soon fell into this pattern. Listed below are brief histories of the German armoured units which took part in the last phase of the North African campaign, from the retreat from El Alamein to the surrender of the last Axis units in Tunisia. Strictly speaking Panzerarmee Afrika should be referred to as Deutsch-Italienische Panzerarmee from late October 1942 but I have continued to use the earlier title here as a matter of convenience.

Panzer-Regiment 5. The regiment had been the first German tank unit to arrive in North Africa in March 1941 and was attached to 5. leichte Afrika-Division which was renamed 21. Panzer-Division in the following August. The division took part in all the major actions of the Western Desert campaign and formed part of Panzerarmee Afrika when the British

offensive of 23 October 1942, commonly referred to as the Second Battle of El Alamein, began (1). The regiment's status at that time is shown in the chart on [page 61](#). By 19 December 1942, after retreating through Cyrenaica, the number of serviceable Pzkw III tanks had fallen to fifteen and this total included five 7.5cm armed versions which began arriving in November. At the same time the battalions were both reduced to just two companies and on 13 January 1943 the remnants of the division, which had been defending the area around Buerat on the Libyan coast, were withdrawn to Sfax in Tunisia to be rebuilt. Within days the regiment had arrived in the area north of Gabes, far behind the front, and was placed under the command of 5. Panzerarmee. But most of the crews of II. Abteilung, together with the tanks that had been left in Libya, were now transferred to Panzer-Regiment 8 of 15. Panzer-Division.

As the units of 21. Panzer-Division were withdrawing to Tunisia a total of twenty-one newly-arrived Pzkw III and seventeen Pzkw IV tanks were assigned to a battalion-sized Kampfgruppe commanded by Hauptmann Werner Grün and this formation was soon incorporated into I. Abteilung, Panzer-Regiment 5. By the first week of February 1943 the regiment's remaining assets were merged into a single battalion and Panzer-Abteilung 190 was absorbed as the regiment's new II. Abteilung. This gave the division a total of sixty-four Pzkw III and twenty-one Pzkw IV tanks. In late February the division took part in the attacks around Kasserine, codenamed Operation Frühlingswind, when the regiment's tanks were personally directed by Generalfeldmarschall Rommel.



A Pzkw III ausf J or early production ausf L of Panzer-Regiment 5 photographed in southern Tunisia. Some time after March 1942 all Pzkw III tanks fitted with the 5cm L/60 gun were referred to, or renamed, as ausf L. The most obvious difference was in the positioning of the armoured covers of the engine air intakes which are not visible here. This is explained further in the Technical Details and Modifications section.



Pzkw III ausf J tanks of 2. Kompanie, Panzer-Regiment 7 photographed just prior to the battles for Kasserine Pass in Tunisia. Note the command pennant on the turret side of the vehicle nearest the camera and the large wooden box on the right side mudguard which was an identifying feature of the regiment's tanks. The Vorpanzer armour lacks the front plate for the mantlet cover which was common at this time. This vehicle is also shown on [page 19](#) of the Camouflage ... Markings section.

In early March the regiment, with forty-six serviceable tanks of all types, took part in Operation Capri, the assault on British positions at Medenine, and later in the same month was formed into a Kampfgruppe which also included the tanks of 10. Panzer-Division, losing twenty-four tanks in the subsequent counterattack at El Hamma. The last available tank strength report dated 3 April 1943 shows that fifteen Pzkw III and six Pzkw IV tanks were considered operational while fifty-two tanks of all types were in repair.

During the last week of April 1943, Panzer-Regiment 5 was detached from the division to form part of a Kampfgruppe nominally led by Oberst Josef Irkens but in reality under the direct control of General Gustav von Vaerst, the commander of 5. Panzerarmee. This formation was made up of almost all the remaining Axis armoured units in Tunisia and also contained Panzer-Regiment 7, Panzer-Regiment 8 and schwere Panzer-Abteilung 501 supported by infantry, artillery and Flak battalions. The last remnants of the division fell back to the Tunisian bridgehead where they destroyed the surviving tanks and surrendered on 13 May 1943. A Kampfgruppe commanded by Major Hans Pfeiffer, which contained much of the division's infantry elements, had capitulated two days earlier.

Panzer-Regiment 7. As part of 10. Panzer-Division the regiment was withdrawn from the Russian Front in April 1942 and reequipped with new Pzkw IV and Pzkw III tanks, the latter all armed with the long-barrelled 5cm L/60 gun.

The division was one of the units rushed to Tunisia in November 1942 and most elements had arrived by 5 December. But just two days prior to this the ships carrying the regiment's 5. Kompanie and 8. Kompanie were sunk with the loss of two Pzkw II, sixteen Pzkw III, twelve Pzkw IV and three Panzerbefehlswagen command tanks.

In early February 1942, in anticipation of Operation Frühlingswind, the division was organised into three Sturmgruppen with the headquarters and I. Abteilung, Panzer-Regiment 7, parts of Panzer-Grenadier-Regiment 69, Panzerjäger-Abteilung 90 and Panzer-Artillerie-Regiment 90 forming the first group led by Oberst Rudolf Gerhardt, the commander of Panzer-Regiment 7. This was a considerable force with about fifty serviceable tanks of all types. The second group, commanded by Oberst Hans Reimann, consisted of a battalion from Panzer-Grenadier-Regiment 86, Reimann's unit, a platoon of Panzerjäger-Abteilung 90, parts of Panzer-Pionier-Bataillon 90 and the Sturmgeschütz-Batterie of Panzer-Artillerie-Regiment 90. The real striking power of Reimann's group was provided by a company of Tiger tanks of schwere-Panzer Abteilung 501. These formations fought in the battles at Medjez El Bab, Kairouan and Sidi Bouzid (1).

On 26 February 1943, the remaining tanks of schwere Panzer-Abteilung 501 were used to form a III. Abteilung for Panzer-Regiment 7 and designated as 7. Kompanie and 8. Kompanie. In addition to the Pzkpfw III and Tiger tanks of the battalion, each company received fifteen PzKpfw IV vehicles. The organisation of these two companies is shown in the chart on [page 63](#).

In March 1943, in a pre-emptive strike at the American positions in the El Guettar valley, the units of 10. Panzer-Division met with some initial success but were eventually beaten back, losing thirty tanks which were irreplaceable at this stage of the campaign. On the evening of Tuesday, 23 March the division's commander, Generalleutnant Friedrich Freiherr von Broich, reported that his total armoured strength amounted to twenty-six vehicles and that his division was no longer in a position to conduct offensive operations. During the last week of April 1943 the few remaining assets of Panzer-Regiment 7 were attached to Kampfgruppe Irkens which contained almost all the remaining Axis armoured units in Tunisia. The survivors, together with the crews of Panzer-Regiment 8, surrendered on 9 May 1943.

Panzer-Regiment 8. The regiment was attached to 15. Panzer-Division and arrived in North Africa in April 1941. The division took part in all the major actions of the Western Desert campaign together with 21. Panzer-Division and just prior to the commencement of the Second Battle of El Alamein in October 1942 was held in reserve on the northern edge of the front. At that time the division's assets were distributed as shown in the chart on [page 61](#).

During the withdrawal from El Alamein the division acted as a rearguard with the mobile elements combined into a Kampfgruppe led by Hauptmann Horst-Henning Siemens, who had taken charge of Panzer-Regiment 8 when the commander, Oberst Willi TEGGE, was killed. As the Axis units fell back through Cyrenaica they were able to inflict a severe reverse on the pursuing British at Marsa el Brega, south of Benghazi, in early December 1942 but their success was largely due to the tanks of the Italian Centauro Division. By this time the total tank strength of Panzerarmee Afrika had been reduced

to four Pzkw II, fourteen Pzkw IV and forty-six Pzkw III. Of the latter, eight were veterans of the early campaigns, armed with the 5cm L/42 gun. But sixteen were the new Pzkw III ausf N equipped with the 7.5cm weapon and supplies of these tanks had first arrived in October and November and were unloaded at Tobruk (1).



A Pzkw III ausf L of Panzer-Regiment 8 photographed near Kasserine when the regiment formed part of Kampfgruppe DAK. Note the elongated cover for the engine air intake, behind the wine bottle, a distinguishing feature of this model. The white marking on the turret stowage box indicates a command tank and had been in use by this regiment for some time.



This Pzkw III ausf M was disabled and abandoned during the fighting in central Tunisia. Although production of this model began in September 1942 it was some time before supplies of the smoke candle dischargers and full sets of Vorpanzer armour were available and very few tanks in this configuration could have made their way to North Africa. This vehicle is also shown on [page 26](#) of the Camouflage ... Markings section.

During the last days of December the Germans withdrew through Sirte towards Tripoli in an effort to reach the units of 5. Panzerarmee which were being built up at that time and Oberst Josef Irkens arrived to take command of Panzer-Regiment 8 and Hauptmann Siemens returned to his company. Charged with conducting a rearguard operation with the few tanks available to him, Oberst Irkens constantly found himself at odds with the division commander who persisted in transferring his experienced tank crewmen to the infantry and anti-tank elements of the division. In addition, the regiment's 8. Kompanie was seconded to Panzer-Regiment 5.

In February and March 1943 the regiment took part in the counterattacks along the Mareth Line between Gafsa and Thelepte and later in the battles for Kasserine Pass. In late April 1943 almost all the remaining Axis

armoured units in Tunisia, including the remnants of Panzer-Regiment 8, were attached to a Kampfgruppe led by Oberst Josef Irkens. Although the Kampfgruppe was able to halt the advance of the British V Corps in the fighting for Medjez el Bab, regaining the strategically important heights of Djebel Bou Aoukaz, less than 30 kilometres from Tunis, the Germans supply of fuel was completely exhausted. Together with the crews of Panzer-Regiment 7, the survivors surrendered on 9 May 1943 after destroying their remaining tanks.

Panzer-Regiment Hermann Göring. Although it was intended that the complete division be sent to Tunisia, just two Pzkw III and eight Pzkw IV tanks of the Panzer regiment's 3. Kompanie, commanded by Oberleutnant Hermann Münzer, took part in the fighting. The tanks first saw action in early April 1943 in the fighting around Beja and although a number of the Panzers were seriously damaged in a single engagement on 30 April north of Medjez el Bab it seems that they were all repaired.

On 6 May 1943 the last of the company's tanks was destroyed in the fighting around the La Mornaghia cemetery in what is today a suburb of Tunis.

Versuchs-Kommando (FL) Tropen. Formed in June 1942, this company-sized unit arrived in North Africa in the following September and was equipped with twenty Borgward BIV and twenty-four Sdkfz 302 Goliath remotely-controlled demolition vehicles with three specially-adapted Pzkw III ausf J tanks. The company was attached to the Nachrichten-Abteilung of 90. leichte Afrika-Division but tests showed that the demolition vehicles were not suitable for the flat desert conditions with the radio receivers being subject to interference from any transmitters within range. The Pzkw III tanks were relegated to providing supply convoy escort duties and in November 1942 the demolition vehicles were destroyed, after any useable equipment was removed. The unit's personnel returned to Germany in January 1943 and the three tanks were eventually attached to Kampfstaffel DAK, an ad-hoc unit. Two tanks of this formation are depicted in the Camouflage & Markings section on [page 17](#).

Panzer-Abteilung 190. Formed in August 1942 with one medium and three light companies, the battalion was renamed II. Abteilung, Panzer-Regiment 202 (1) and vice versa in the following September.

The new Panzer-Abteilung 190 was subordinated to 90. leichte Division, which had been serving in North Africa since June 1941, and the first elements of the battalion arrived at Benghazi in Libya on 8 November 1942. But on the same day the first Allied landings in Morocco took place and only six Pzkw III tanks of 2. Kompanie were unloaded before the remainder of the battalion was diverted to Tunisia. Between 12 and 22 November a total of five Pzkw II, forty-six Pzkw III, ten Pzkw IV tanks, and two Panzerbefehlswagen III command vehicles arrived in Bizerte in northern Tunisia and were fed into the battle as the companies landed. The battalion's 4. Kompanie was attached to Kampfgruppe Witzig and supported the men of Fallschirm-Pionier Bataillon 11 in an attack on the British positions around the crossroads near Djebel Aboid, south-west of Mateur, on 17 November losing eight of the company's ten Pzkw IV tanks in the process. The Pzkw III companies were attached to Korpsgruppe Fischer, which also contained most of 10. Panzer-Division, and Angriffsgruppe Weber, a formidable formation which included Kampfgruppe Lueder operating the first Tiger tanks to arrive in North Africa (2).

On 26 February 1943 the surviving tanks of Panzer-Abteilung 190 were absorbed by II. Abteilung, Panzer-Regiment 5.

Panzer-Abteilung Grün. Formed in late January 1943 under the command of Hauptmann Werner Grün, a company commander from Panzer-Regiment 5, the battalion received twenty-one Pzkw III tanks which had arrived in Tunisia in the previous December and seventeen Pzkw IV vehicles. Later reports suggest that the consignment of light tanks may have been made up of eight 7.5cm-armed Pzkw III ausf N and thirteen Pzkw III equipped with the 5cm L/60 long-barrelled main gun. This unit was short lived and was later used to create a new I. Abteilung, Panzer-Regiment 5. Although this unit is described in many accounts as an ad-hoc Kampfgruppe, which it

essentially was, it is mentioned in several contemporary documents as a separate entity.



Left: A Pzkw III ausf J of 1. Kompanie, Panzer-Abteilung 190 photographed in late 1942 when the battalion was attached to Kampfgruppe Lueder. Note the dark stripe on the side of the turret stowage box which appears to continue across the top surface. It may indicate a commander's tank but the company number would suggest otherwise. Note also the Vorpanzer armour on the hull front and the remains of a stowage rack, probably intended to hold fuel containers, on the mudguard above the first return roller. Another field-modified rack is fitted to the rear hull and this particular tank was also photographed towing a captured British 2pdr anti-tank gun.

Right: A Pzkw III ausf L of 6. Kompanie, Panzer-Regiment 5 said to have been disabled at Medenine in south-eastern Tunisia in March 1943. In early February of the same year the surviving tanks of Panzer-Abteilung 190 were used to build II. Abteilung of Panzer-Regiment 5 and the new battalion's tanks were characterised by the large turret numbers evident here. The late production features visible on this model, including the lack of turret vision ports and hull escape hatch, and the presence of an earlier number, would suggest that this may be one of the tanks that arrived in North Africa with Panzer-Abteilung 190. Both vehicles shown here are also depicted in the Camouflage ... Markings section on [page 18](#).



Pzkw III ausf N tanks from the headquarters of schwere Panzer-Abteilung 501 possibly photographed in December 1942 when this unit operated with a motorcycle company of Panzergrenadier-Regiment 69 and the tanks of Panzer-Abteilung 190 as part of Kampfgruppe Lueder. The vehicle nearest the camera is also shown and discussed on [page 20](#) of the Camouflage ... Markings section of this book.

Schwere Panzer-Abteilung 501. Formed in May 1942 under the command of Major Hans-Georg Lueder, by October the battalion reported that twenty Tigers and sixteen Pzkw III tanks were on hand and in the same month these vehicles were prepared for operations in a tropical climate.

On 10 November 1942 the battalion's first company left Germany and, travelling by rail through Italy, the tanks were prepared for transportation by sea to Tunisia while the crews were flown in on Junkers 52 transport aircraft, the first units arriving towards the end of the month. The platoons of the second company that had completed their training were sent to southern France.

On 23 November 1943 the first vehicles disembarked at Bizerta, 80 kilometres north-east of Tunis, and the battalion first went into action on 1

December when three Tigers and four Pzkw III tanks of 1. Kompanie, led by Hauptmann Nikolai Freiherr von Nolde, attacked US Army positions near Djedida.

Elsewhere, the remaining tanks of schwere Panzer-Abteilung 501, as part of Kampfgruppe Lueder, were able to stop an Allied breakthrough at Terbourba on 4 December 1943 (1).

On 9 December the platoons of 2. Kompanie which had originally been sent to France, had made their way to Sicily while the company's remaining tanks and crews left Fallingb. in Germany for Italy. It was not until 20 January that the tanks of 2. Kompanie went into action for the first time in an attack along the Robaa road, known today as Bargou. At about the same time the operational tanks of 1. Kompanie were formed into three groups, the first two supporting elements of Gebirgsjäger-Regiment 756, while the third group, under Major Lueder, was attached to Panzergrenadier-Regiment 69. In the ensuing combat Lueder claimed that twenty-six enemy guns were destroyed and a number of American halftracks captured which were used by the Panzergrenadiers during the remainder of the campaign.

In late January the battalion took part in Operations Eilbote I and Eilbote II where the largest concentration of vehicles to date, eleven Tigers and fourteen Pzkw III tanks, were unable to break through the British defensive lines around Kairouan. The first company now withdrew towards the north to As-Subayhah where the tanks were attached to 10. Panzer-Division for Operation Frühlingswind, an attack through the Faïd Pass north of Sidi Bouzid.

By 26 February 1943 the second company, which had remained in the Pont du Fahs area facing the British, rejoined the battalion's first company and both were now formally integrated into Panzer-Regiment 7 of 10. Panzer-Division as 7. Kompanie and 8. Kompanie. This reorganisation is also examined in the chart on [page 63](#).

Each company was reinforced by fifteen Pzkw IV tanks and as III. Abteilung of Panzer-Regiment 7 took part in Operation Ochsenkopf, sometimes referred to as the Battle of Sidi Nsir or the Battle of Hunts Gap.

Held up by an intense artillery barrage and an extensive minefield, the Germans could make no headway and in the savage fighting here Major Lueder, his battalion adjutant Oberleutnant Stockhammer, Oberleutnant Kodar, the commander of the headquarters light platoon, and Oberleutnant Hartmann were all wounded.

On 1 March all offensive operations were halted and the two companies reported that of the surviving vehicles just three Pzkw III tanks and one Tiger were considered combat ready. On 17 March the remnants of the battalion were attached to schwere Panzer-Abteilung 504 which had arrived in Tunisia only days before.

Schwere Panzer-Abteilung 504. Formed in the first weeks of 1943, the battalion was commanded by Major August Seidensticker, who had served with Panzer-Regiment 31 in Russia. By Friday, 12 March 1943 the first three tanks from 1. Kompanie had arrived in Tunisia and the following Wednesday the surviving elements of schwere Panzer-Abteilung 501, which was at that time without a commanding officer, were attached to the battalion ([1](#)). The battalion's 2. Kompanie remained in Italy and took no part in the fighting in Tunisia although a number of the company's Pzkw III tanks, without their crews, did find their way to North Africa. The battalion's establishment at this time is shown in the chart on [page 63](#).

The battalion's first combat took place west of Maknassy where an attempted breakthrough to the coast by the Americans was halted with Major Seidensticker claiming that thirty-five enemy tanks were destroyed. The battalion spent the remainder of March fighting in this area supporting the infantrymen of the Hermann Göring Division and in early April defended the German positions around Enfidah.

On 16 April 1943 the last of the battalion's tanks was unloaded at Bizerta and during the next weeks they supported the paratroopers of Fallschirmjäger-Regiment 5 in what came to be known as the Battle of Longstop Hill. On 26 April 1943, a number of tanks were rushed to the north to support 10. Panzer-Division and in a single action along the

southern edge of the Medjerda Valley managed to destroy more than twenty US Sherman tanks.

In early May 1943 the battalion, along with most of the surviving armoured units in Tunisia, was attached to Kampfgruppe Irkens and fought against the British around Medjez el Bab, withdrawing towards Tunis. It was at this time, although the exact date is uncertain, that Major Seidensticker was wounded and taken prisoner. On 12 May 1943, with the surrender of the Axis forces in Tunisia, the crews destroyed the last of their tanks.



Although this PzKpfw III ausf L is sometimes associated with schwere Panzer-Abteilung 504, a positive identification is not possible. It is, however, typical of the tanks that served with the battalion's 1. Kompanie in North Africa and was photographed at a time when the company was operating in Tunisia. In addition, the field-modified bracket on the hull glacis is identical to that seen on the 2. Kompanie PzKpfw III ausf M mentioned on [page 26](#). Note the Vorpanzer armour on the hull front and smoke candle dischargers on the turret sides. The Fahrgestelle number, just visible behind the left side fender, would suggest that this tank was assembled by MIAG in early 1942.

THE PZKPFW III IN NORTH AFRICA

The Panzerkampfwagen (Pzkw) III was the most important armoured fighting vehicle in service with the German army during the North African campaign, at least in terms of numbers employed. Of the 297 tanks that arrived in Libya with Panzer-Regiment 5 and Panzer-Regiment 8 between February and May 1941, a total of 142 were versions of this sturdy and reliable vehicle. When one considers that they were supported by only forty of the 7.5cm-armed Pzkw IV tanks, the importance of the lighter vehicle becomes obvious. Although the Pzkw III was at a disadvantage when faced by the more heavily-armoured British types, most notably the Matilda II, the arrival of tanks fitted with the long-barrelled 5cm L/60 gun in the spring of 1942 went some way towards addressing the imbalance. Over 800 gun tanks and twenty-six purpose-built Panzerbefehlswagen (PzBefWg) III command vehicles were shipped to North Africa between March 1941 and May 1943 and the last vehicles were lost in the fighting for the city of Tunis or destroyed by their own crews. The figures given below for vehicle deliveries are based on the transport lists that have survived the war and some are the subject of debate. Where this is the case I have tried to make it clear.

Date	Arrivals and Deliveries
March 1941	Sixty-one Pzkw III tanks and four PzBefWg III of Panzer-Regiment 5 arrive in Tripoli between 10 and 11 March 1941. Two days earlier a fire had destroyed ten of the regiment's Pzkw III in Naples.
April 1941	From 10 to 14 April 1941 ten replacement Pzkw III tanks, requisitioned from Panzer-Regiment 6, arrive for Panzer-Regiment 5. They did not reach the front for another two weeks.
May 1941	Between 25 April and 6 May 1941 seventy-one Pzkw III and six PzBefWg III for Panzer-Regiment 8 arrive.

July and August 1941	During July and August fifteen PzKpfw III arrived and were assigned to Panzer-Regiment 5 to replace combat losses. A further ten PzKpfw III were delivered which were assigned evenly to Panzer-Regiment 5 and Panzer-Regiment 8.
December 1941	On 13 December 1941 the full complement, seventeen tanks, of both 3. Kompanie and 7. Kompanie, Panzer-Regiment 5 were lost at sea.
January to May 1942	A total of 211 PzKpfw III tanks and four PzBefWg III were delivered and assigned to Panzer-Regiment 5 and Panzer-Regiment 8 to replace combat losses. Among these tanks were the first examples of the PzKpfw III ausf J armed with the 5cm L/60 gun to arrive in North Africa. The first of sixty-four of these tanks had been accepted by the army in January 1942 with a further 122 taken on in the following month.
January to May 1942	A further thirty-four PzKpfw III are delivered and assigned to 3. Kompanie and 7. Kompanie Panzer-Regiment 5 to replace the tanks lost at sea in December 1941.
March 1942	Two PzKpfw III tanks, en route to North Africa, were lost at sea and never assigned.
July and August 1942	A total of seventy-six PzKpfw III are delivered and all assigned to Panzer-Regiment 5 and Panzer-Regiment 8 to replace combat losses. In late June a single PzBefWg III was unloaded in Libya.
November 1942	On 8 November, six PzKpfw III arrived with 2. Kompanie, Panzer-Abteilung 190 and were unloaded at Benghazi, Libya. Between 12 and 22 November, forty-six PzKfw III tanks were

	unloaded at Bizerte in Tunisia with the remainder of Panzer-Abteilung 190. The battalion also had two PzBefWg III command tanks.
November and January 1942	A total of eighty-nine Pztkpfw III and six PzBefWg III tanks from Panzer-Regiment 7 of 10. Panzer-Division arrive in Tunisia. On 3 December 1942 sixteen of the regiment's Pztkpfw III tanks were lost at sea, giving a total of 105 tanks for 10. Panzer-Division. At least one authoritative account suggests that this is the figure for vehicles armed with the L/60 gun and that a further four Pztkpfw III, referred to simply as kurz or short, were on hand.
December 1942	Sixteen Pztkpfw III and three PzBefWg III tanks of Panzer-Regiment 7 lost at sea.
January 1943	Twenty-one Pztkpfw III arrive in North Africa and are all assigned to Panzer-Abteilung Grün, an ad-hoc unit which is later absorbed by I. Abteilung Panzer-Regiment 5.
March and April 1943	From 12 March to 16 April 1943 a total of nineteen Pztkpfw III tanks and eleven Tigers of 1. Kompanie, schwere Panzer-Abteilung 504 arrived in Tunisia. Most accounts state that the light tanks were all Pztkpfw III ausf L but photographic evidence shows that at least one tank was a Pztkpfw III ausf M and as many as three similar models were taken over from the battalion's 2. Kompanie which remained in Sicily. This is also confirmed by contemporary photographs and film. In any case, all the Pztkpfw III were all equipped with the 5cm L/60 gun.
April 1943	In April 1943, 3. Kompanie, Panzer-Regiment Hermann Göring arrived in Tunisia with two

	Pzkw III, both fitted with the L/60 gun, and eight Pzkw IV tanks. Elements of the Hermann Göring division had arrived in Tunisia in late February 1943 and fought with various Kampfgruppen. The Panzer company was attached to schwere Panzer-Abteilung 504.
May 1943	

Pzkw III Production Notes and Comments	
Production of the Pzkw III ausf J with the 5cm L/42 gun commences. All vehicles were painted in a base coat of RAL 7021 Schwartzgrau. On 17 March 1941 a camouflage scheme of RAL 8000 Gelbbraun and RAL 7008 Graugrün was introduced.	
The last production models of the Pzkw III ausf H are assembled by MIAG.	
First Pzkw III tanks armed with the 5cm L/60 gun accepted by the Heereswaffenamt.	
The tanks that reached Panzer-Regiment 5 and Panzer-Regiment 8 were in poor condition and many had not been fitted with all the required Tropen (tropical) modifications. In addition, numerous pieces of equipment including jacks, spare wheels, fuel and water containers and tools had been stolen in transit. In May 1942 the last tanks fitted with the 5cm L/42 gun left the factories. From the end of March all vehicles assembled	

with the 5cm L/60 gun are referred to as Pzkw III ausf L although some are built on the hulls of earlier models.

Production of the Pzkw III ausf J ends in May 1942.

Production of the Pzkw III ausf L commences. On 12 March 1942 a camouflage scheme of RAL 8020 Braun with a disruptive of RAL 7027 Grau was introduced.

Production of the Pzkw III ausf N commences in July utilising over 400 surplus 7.5cm L/24 guns. The first Pzkw III ausf M leaves the factories in September.

Production of the Pzkw III ausf L ends in October. All fifty-two gun tanks of Panzer-Abteilung 190 were armed with the long-barrelled 5cm L/60 gun.

A report of 7 November 1942 states that the decision had been made that all new production Pzkw III tanks and vehicles returned to Germany for repair were to be fitted with the 7.5cm L/24 gun.

On 1 December 1942 the Heereszeugamt records that a total of 2,704 Pzkw III tanks of all models are on hand with operational and training units.

The last Pzkw III ausf M is assembled.

Beginning in February 1942, the last 167 Pzkw III ausf M were fitted with the 7.5cm L/24. On 18 February 1943 a new camouflage scheme, which was applicable to all theatres, was

introduced made up of a base coat of a colour initially referred to as Dunkelgelb nach Muster over which disruptive patterns could be applied using RLM Olivgrün and RAL 8017 Rotbraun. It is highly unlikely that any vehicles arrived in North Africa in this colour scheme.

In addition to the vehicles mentioned above a further forty-seven Pzkw III were lost at sea between November 1942 and May 1943.





Said to have been photographed at the time of the Kasserine Pass battles in February 1943, this Pzkw III ausf J from Panzer-Regiment 5 of 21. Panzer-Division may be one of the veterans of the earlier fighting in Egypt and Libya. In late February the regiment reported that just three tanks armed with the short-barrelled 5cm L/42 gun were serviceable and they are last mentioned in an April report where all are in repair. Note the extensive use of lengths of spare track and sandbags as added protection. Note also the use of foliage camouflage, a feature of the operations in Tunisia. This vehicle is also shown on [page 24](#) of the Camouflage ... Markings section of this book where the unusual markings, just visible here, are discussed.

Notes

1. The German command structure underwent several changes during the North African campaign and these are explained in detail in *TankCraft 36: Panzer III, German Army Light Tank, North Africa Tripoli to El Alamein 1941–1942*.

1. The regiment's II. Abteilung was initially held in reserve and later attached to a Kampfgruppe commanded by Oberst Rudolf Lang which fought in the attacks on Sidi Nsir and Beja in March and in the defensive operations between Faid and Sfax in April.

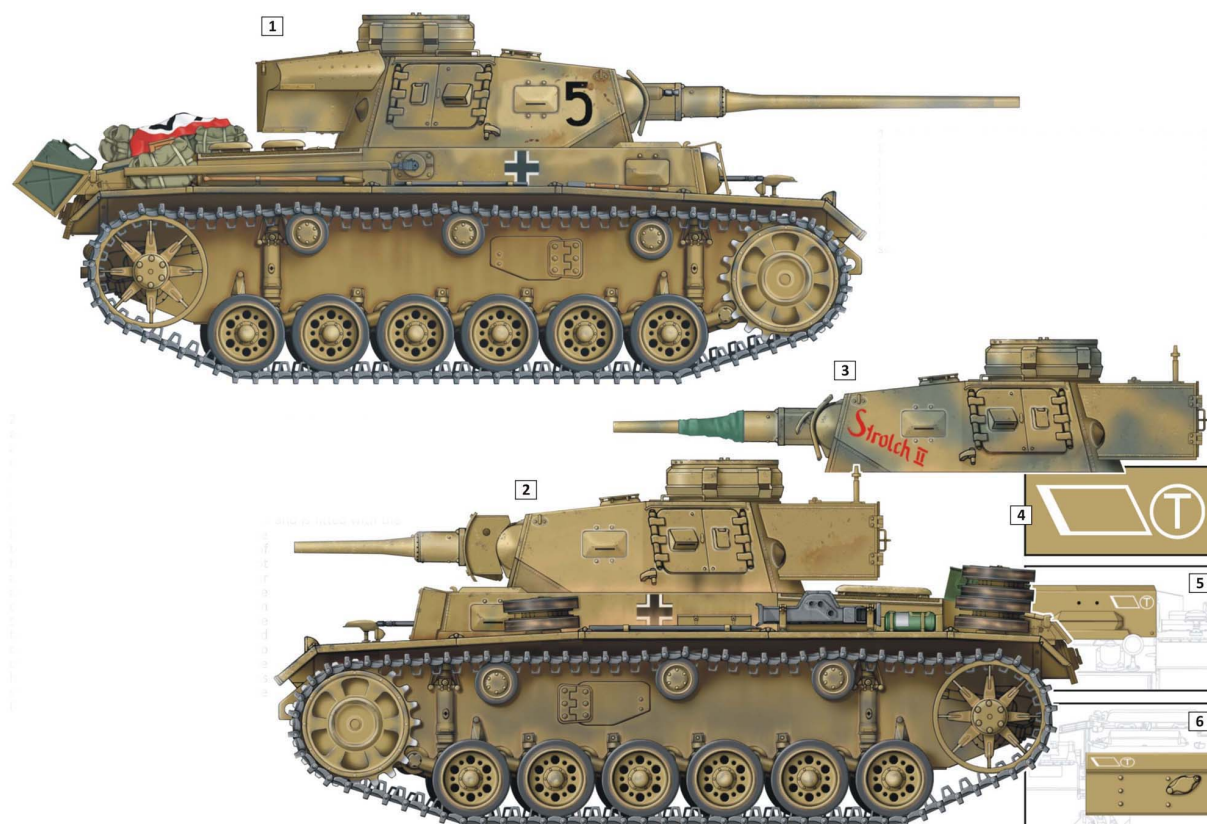
1. Between 23 October 1942, when the British offensive began, and the first week of December, the Germans had lost twenty-nine Pzkw II, thirty-one Pzkw IV, all the Panzerbefehlswagen command tanks and a staggering 161 Pzkw III tanks.

1. The other battalions of Panzer-Regiment 202 were eventually used to form fought in the Italian campaign.

2. Major Lueder's Kampfgruppe also contained the Pzkw III ausf N tanks of schwere Panzer-Abteilung 501.

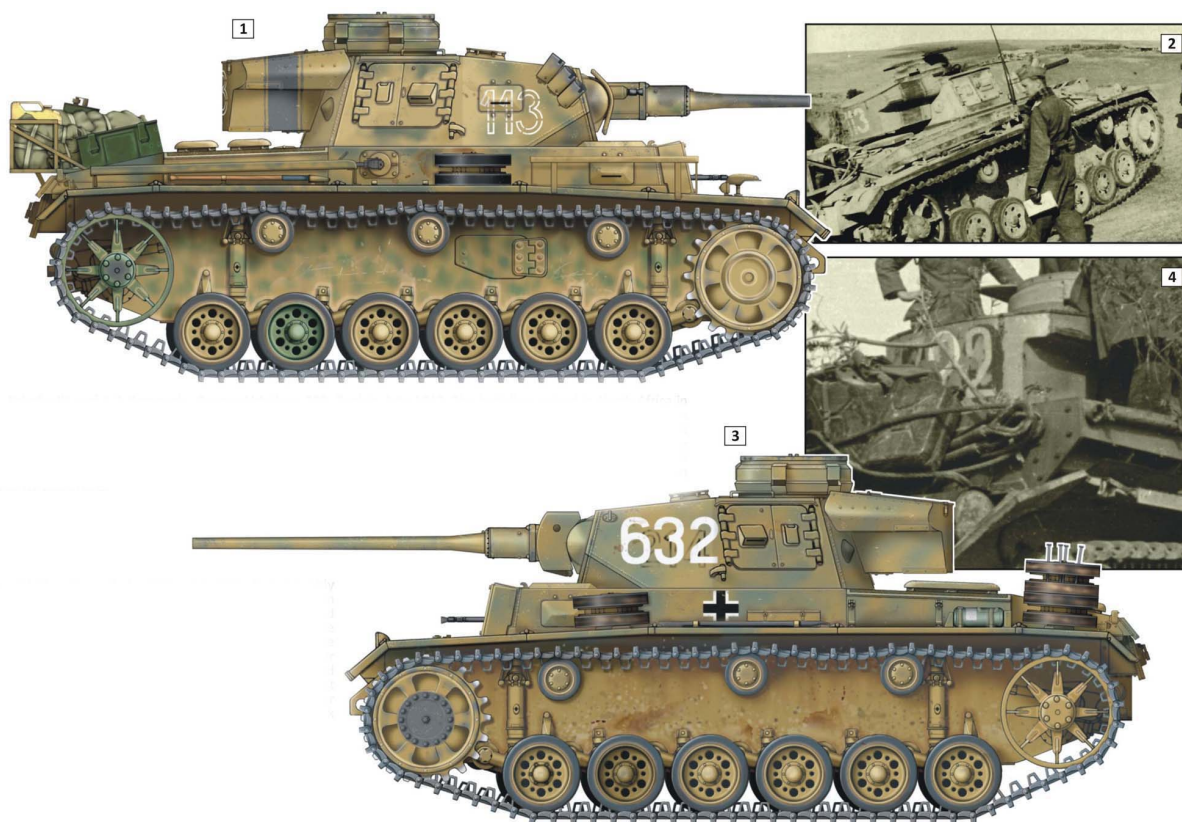
1. The Kampfgruppe commanded by Major Lueder was actually formed on 24 November, before any Tigers were available, from elements of Panzer-Abteilung 190 and 10. Panzer-Division. It was some time before Lueder's own tanks could join him.

1. This may have included as many as twelve Pzkw III, seven Pzkw IV and eleven Tiger tanks.



1. Pzkw III ausf J. 5. Kompanie, Panzer-Regiment 8. Egypt, autumn 1942. Abandoned after the El Alamein battles, this tank is typical of the later production Pzkw III ausf J tanks fitted with the 5cm L/60 main gun. Note that the Vorpanzer armour attached to the hull front lacks the side section. The field-modified stowage rack on the hull rear is slightly speculative as the vehicle in our photograph was heavily damaged but is similar to those seen on other tanks of the regiment.

2. Pzkw III ausf J. Versuchs-Kommando (FL) Tropen. Egypt, autumn 1942. This company was equipped with three specially-adapted tanks and a number of Goliath remotely-controlled demolition vehicles and arrived in North Africa in June 1942. The Goliaths proved unsuccessful and the tanks were eventually relegated to convoy escort duties and later attached to Kampfstaffel DAK, an ad-hoc formation. This vehicle is one of three Pzkw III (Funklenk) built by Henschel in March 1942 and is fitted with the later type of armoured radio box on the turret rear, identified by the placement of the antenna on the left side. Apparently not all were equipped with the Vorpanzer armour. At least one other tank of the company was named (3) and painted in some kind of disruptive camouflage. The tactical symbol denoting a fully-tracked company and the unit insignia (4), made up of the letter T in a circle, was carried on the hull front (5) and rear (6) in the positions shown here. Note the black outline of the Balkenkreuz national marking.



1. Pzkw III ausf J. 1. Kompanie, Panzer-Abteilung 190. Tunisia, late 1942. The battalion arrived in North Africa in November 1942 and contained fifty-two Pzkw III tanks, six of which were unloaded in Libya and the remainder in Tunisia. The very light shade evident in the series of photographs on which this illustration is based would suggest that RAL 8000 was still in use as a base coat at the time. I can offer no explanation as to the significance of the dark stripe marking on the stowage bin but it is quite clearly visible in our photograph (2). Note the stowage rack on the right side mudguard which was a common modification within this battalion. It is badly damaged in our photograph but has been reconstructed here.

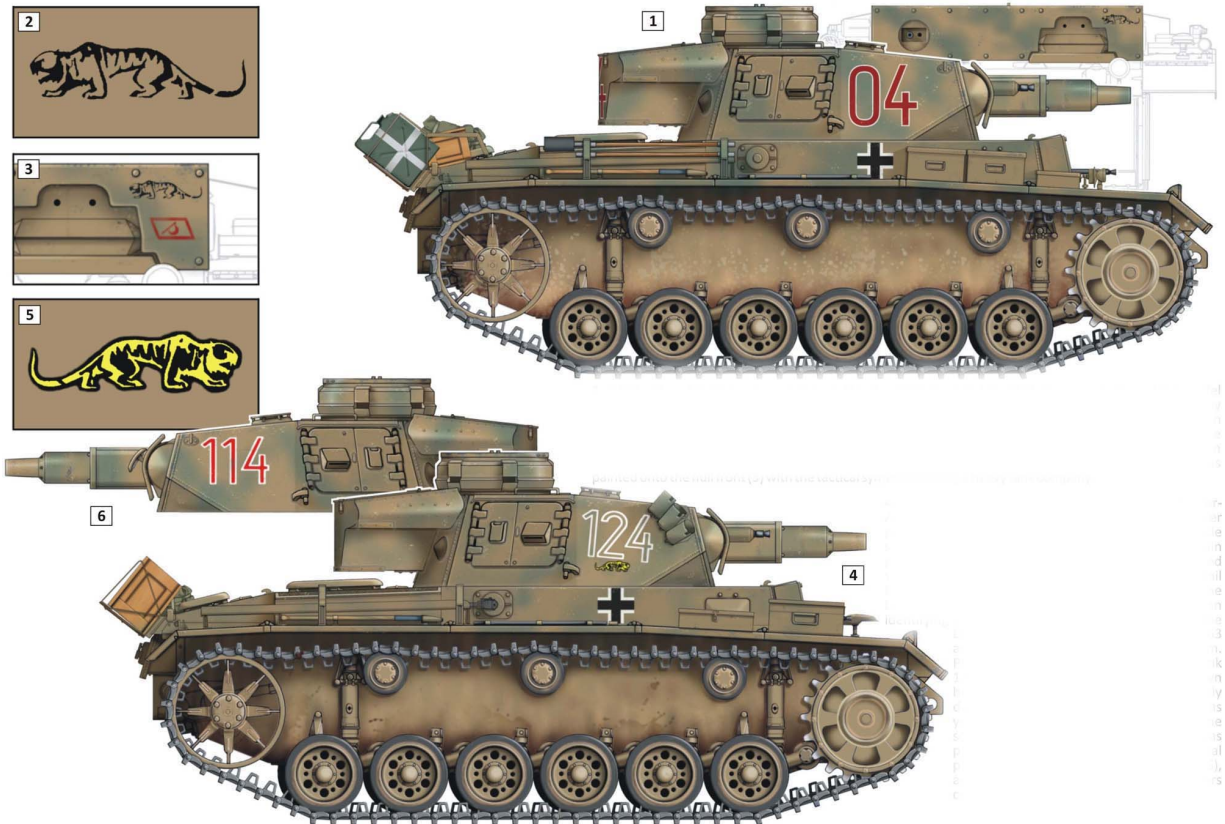
3. Pzkw III ausf L. Unit uncertain but possibly 6. Kompanie, Panzer-Regiment 5. Tunisia, spring 1942. On 6 February 1943 Panzer-Abteilung 190 was renamed II. Abteilung, Panzer-Regiment 5 and the use of large white company numbers was an identifying feature of the battalion's tanks at that time. This can also be seen in our photograph of a 7. Kompanie Pzkw IV (4) where an old number has been painted over. Just visible on the turret side of the Pzkw III is what may be the tank's former company number, possibly 214, rendered as a black outline.



1. Pzkw III ausf J. 2. Kompanie, Panzer-Regiment 7. Tunisia, autumn 1942. Photographs of the tanks of this company are shown on [page 5](#). Note the 10. Panzer-Division Bison insignia (2) and company number on the rear of the stowage box (3). Also shown is the division's official formation badge (4). The command pennant on the turret is clearly visible in the photograph on which this illustration is based although the colours depicted here are conjectural. The largewooden box on the mudguard was an identifying feature of this regiment's tanks.

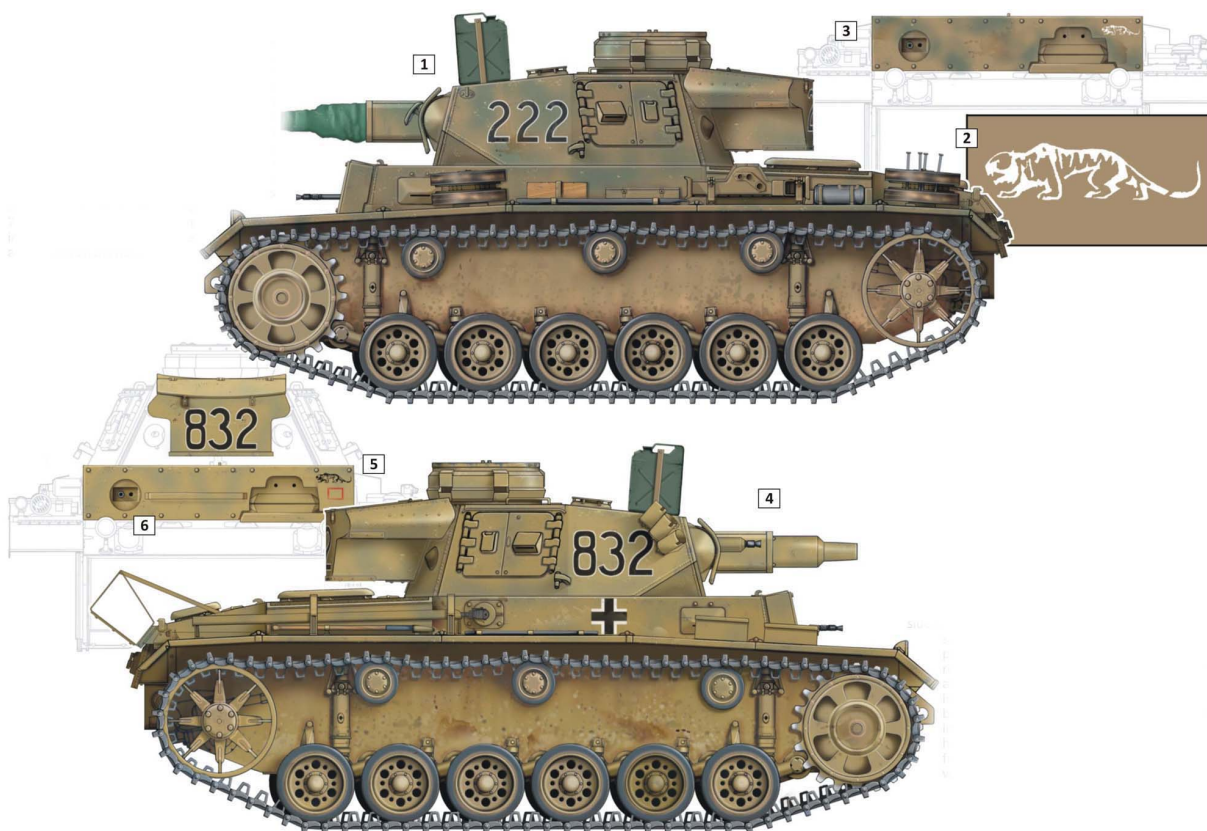
5. Pzkw III ausf N. Unit unidentified. Tunisia, summer 1942. This illustration is based on the photograph shown at left (6) which was published in *Signal* magazine in March 1943 and so must have been taken before that time. The location has been identified as the old harbour at Bizerte in Tunisia and the vehicle has production features that suggest it was assembled prior to September 1942. Unusually, the hull is fitted with the first type of Tropen air intakes. Although it is difficult to be certain, the camouflage seems to be made up of RAL 8000 and RAL 8020, the two authorised base colours. The turret number 201 is just visible in our photograph and as it is unlike the style and position seen on the tanks of units known to have been allocated this type I suspect that this tank may be from Panzer-Abteilung 190.

6. It is sometimes claimed that the colour images reproduced in *Signal* magazine were hand-coloured monochrome images. They were in fact made using colour slides, which was common practice until the advent of digital technology, and the publisher was a pioneer of colour work. The image above was scanned from an original magazine in the author's collection.



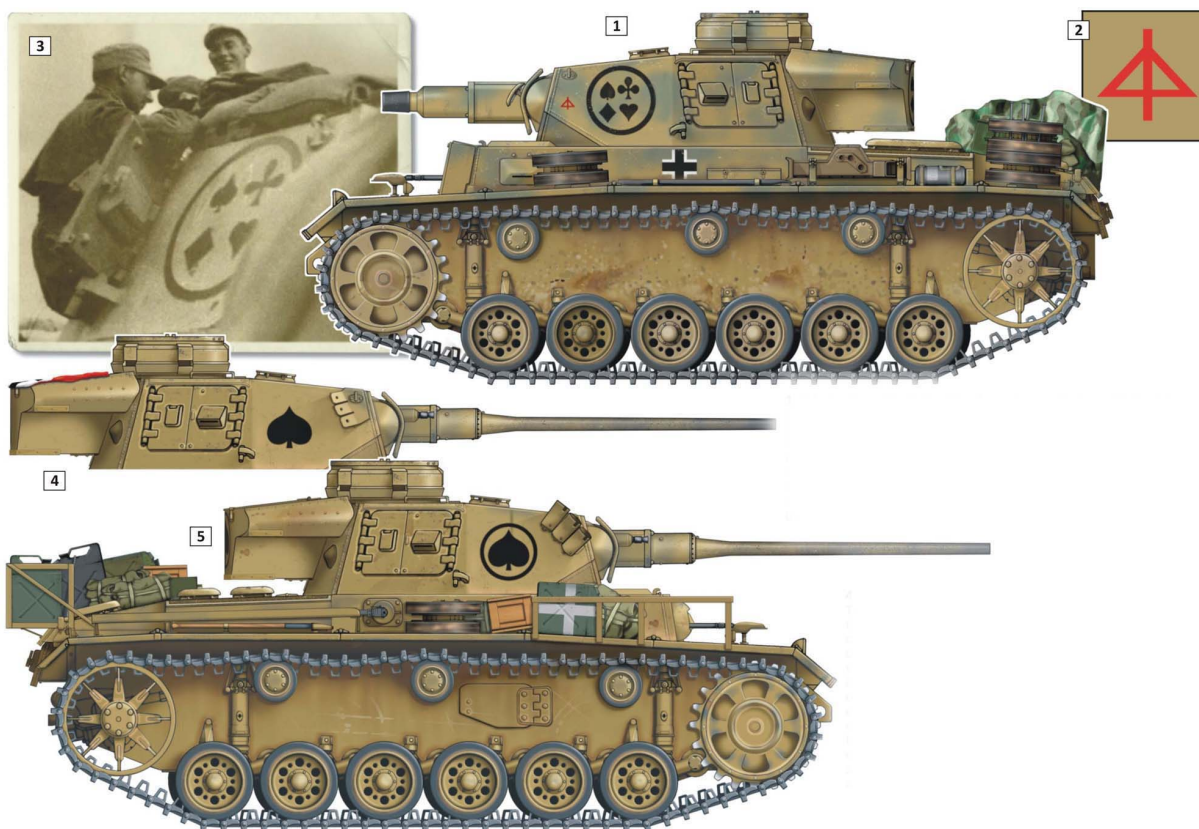
1. Pzkw III ausf N. Stab, schwere Panzer-Abteilung 501. Tunisia, late 1942. The manufacture of this model commenced in July 1942 and given that, and the very dark shade evident in most photographs, we may assume that the battalion's Pzkw III tanks were painted in the RAL 8020 and RAL 7027 scheme instituted in the previous March. The tank shown here is a later production version without the bullet splash guard on the hull roof, no escape hatch on the hull side, simplified collar on the main gun barrel and gun cleaning rods in their bracket in front of the antenna trough. The battalion's unit insignia, rendered as a black outline (2), was painted onto the hull front (3) with the tactical symbol denoting a heavy tank company.

4. Pzkw III ausf N. 1. Kompanie, schwere Panzer-Abteilung 501. Tunisia, late 1942. This tank is also a later production model with the same features as the vehicle shown above, except for the bolted-on collar of the main gun. Many of the battalion's Pzkw III tanks were fitted with stowage racks on the hull rear which varied in detail but were generally similar to those depicted here. The boxes welded to the forward mudguard were also an identifying feature. The company numbers used by the battalion are described in detail on [page 63](#) and followed the standard three-digit system. Photographs show that those applied to tank 124, and also 134, were slanted as shown here. The battalion insignia (5) has a slightly darker background, which is rendered here as yellow, and is applied to the turret side. Some sources state that the turret number was painted as a white outline but several photographs clearly show a darker centre (6), assumed here to be red as those of the Tigers certainly were.



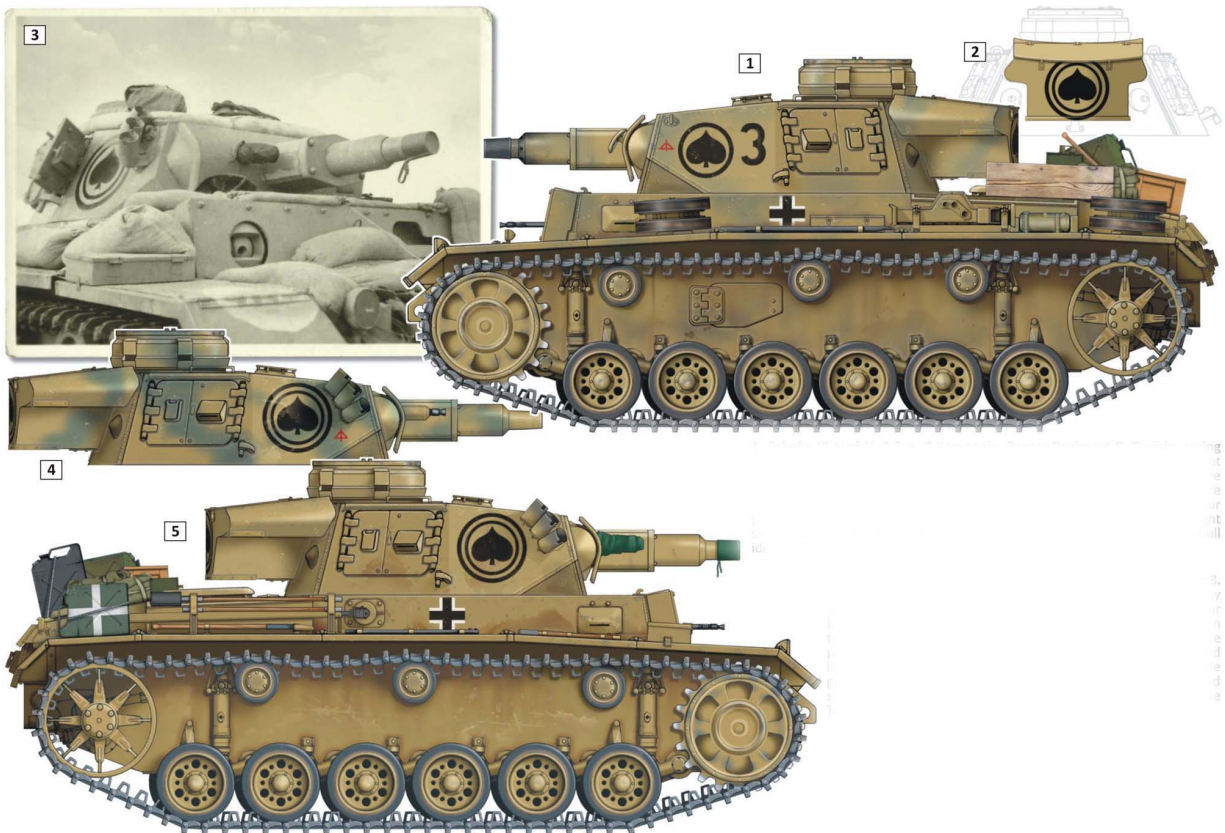
1. Pzkw III ausf N. 2. Kompanie, schwere Panzer-Abteilung 501. Tunisia, late 1942. Based on photographs of this tank, and other 2. Kompanie vehicles, it would seem that the stowage rack on the rear hull was not a universal modification and that many of the Pzkw III tanks of this company were fitted with a simple bracket to hold fuel container son the turret roof. The company numbers also appear decidedly darker and were definitely rendered in black when the company was absorbed by Panzer-Regiment 7. Note also that the battalion insignia (2) was painted in white and carried on the hull front (3).

4. Pzkw III ausf N. 8. Kompanie, Panzer-Regiment 7. Tunisia, spring 1943. This illustration is based on a very clear colour photograph taken in May 1943 and published in Life magazine. Formerly of 2. Kompanie, schwere Panzer-Abteilung 501, this tank has the bracket on the turret roof and stowage rack on the rear hull. The new company numbers have a decidedly hand-done look and the style of those on the turretside differ from those on the stowage box. There is no sign of the former number and it is entirely possible that the tanks were completely repainted, which would explain the RAL 8000and RAL 7008 camouflage scheme. The unit in signia was retained but is now in black and below that there is a small rectangle, just visible in a monochrome snapshot, which is depicted here as red (5). Note the bracket on the hull front which was apparently removed before the well-known colour image was taken (6).



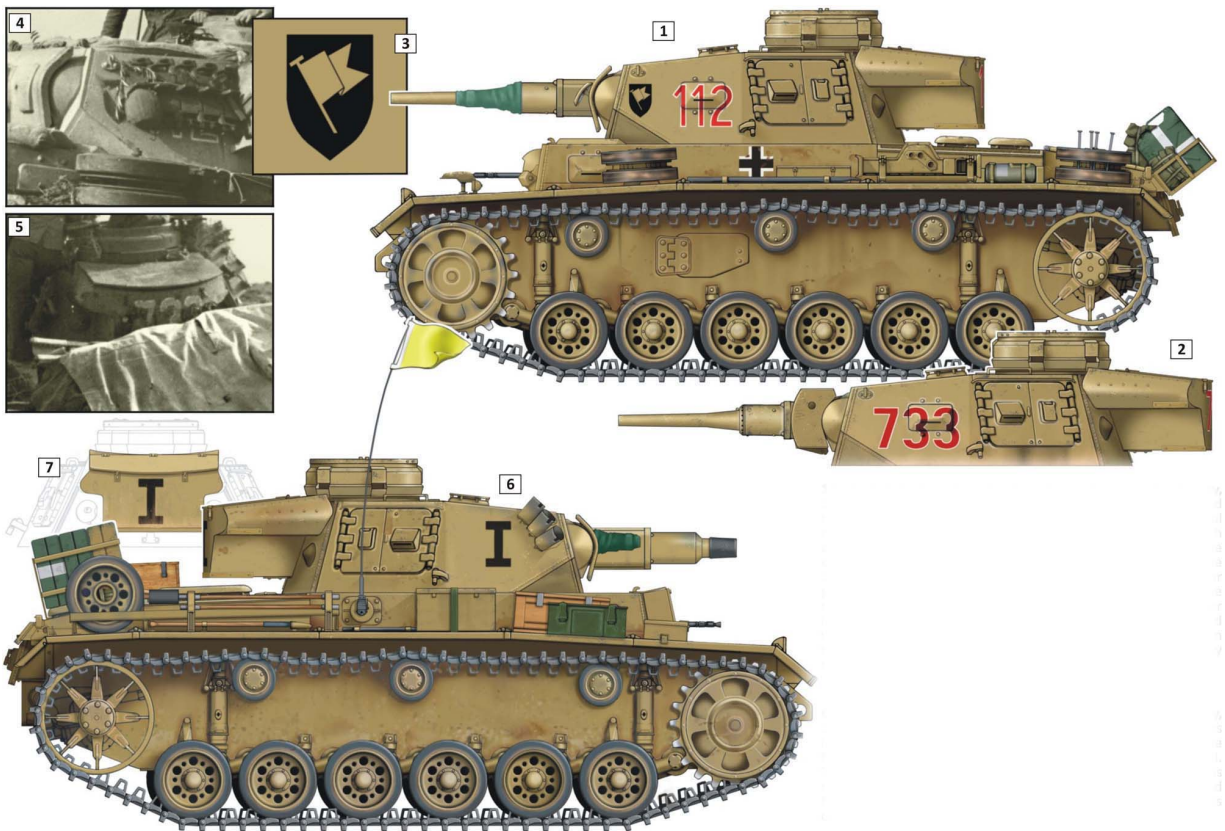
1. Pzkw III ausf N. Stab, I. Abteilung, Panzer-Regiment 8. Tunisia, spring 1943. The companies of this battalion were identified by playing card symbols and the battalion commander's tank shown here has smaller versions of all four enclosed by a circle. The unit insignia of 15. Panzer-Division (2) is rendered in red. Our photograph (3) shows the same vehicle with Hauptmann Hans-Günter Stotten, who led the battalion, in the cupola. This tank has no hull escape hatch or smoke dischargers but is fitted with the bullet splash guard in front of the turret and later simplified barrel collar.

4 and 5. Pzkw III ausf J. 2. Kompanie, Panzer-Regiment 8. Tunisia, spring 1943. Within this company, and probably throughout the battalion, the platoons were identified by the card symbol alone, as shown here, a single circle (5) and a double circle for 1. Zug, 2. Zug and 3. Zug respectively. Both vehicles depicted here had features of the early arrivals including the field-modified stowage racks on the hull rear and on the forward mudguard. Both had hulls built with the side escape hatch and the turrets were fitted with smoke dischargers, although only the bracket could be seen on 4. Note that the battalion insignia was usually, but not always, repeated on the rear of the turret stowage box. Although unconfirmed, it seems that 1. Kompanie was identified by a club, 3. Kompanie by a heart and 4. Kompanie by a diamond shape.



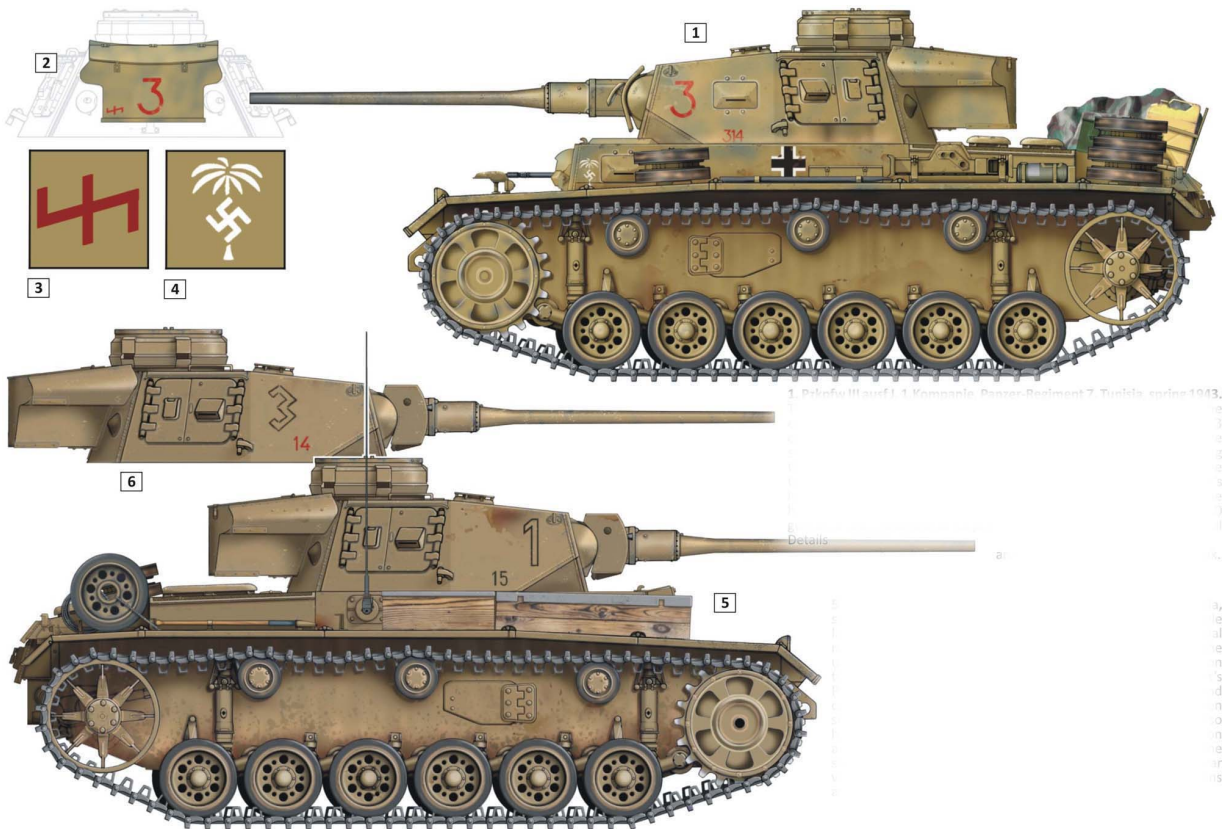
1. Pzkw III ausf N. 2. Zug, 2. Kompanie, Panzer-Regiment 8. Tunisia, spring 1943. Some tanks of the regiment's I. Abteilung also carried large turret numbers, as shown here, which probably denoted the individual vehicle. Note that when the battalion insignia was repeated on the rear of the Rommelkiste stowage box (2) it was often too large to fit neatly on the available surface. Our photograph (3) shows clearly that these vehicles were painted in a very lightshade, probably RAL 8000. This vehicle is based on an early Pzkw III ausf L hull identified by the escape hatch.

4 and 5. Pzkw III ausf N. 3. Zug, 2. Kompanie, Panzer-Regiment 8. Tunisia, spring 1943. The available photographs suggest that many of the battalion's tanks were painted in a single camouflage colour but some feature a disruptive pattern (4) and the contrast between the two shades is quite high. Both tanks depicted here had late production modifications including the lack of a bullet splash guard in front of the turret, the hull without an escape hatch, a rack for the gun cleaning rods on the hull side in front of the antenna trough and simplified barrel collar. These features are explained further in the Technical Details and Modifications section of this book.



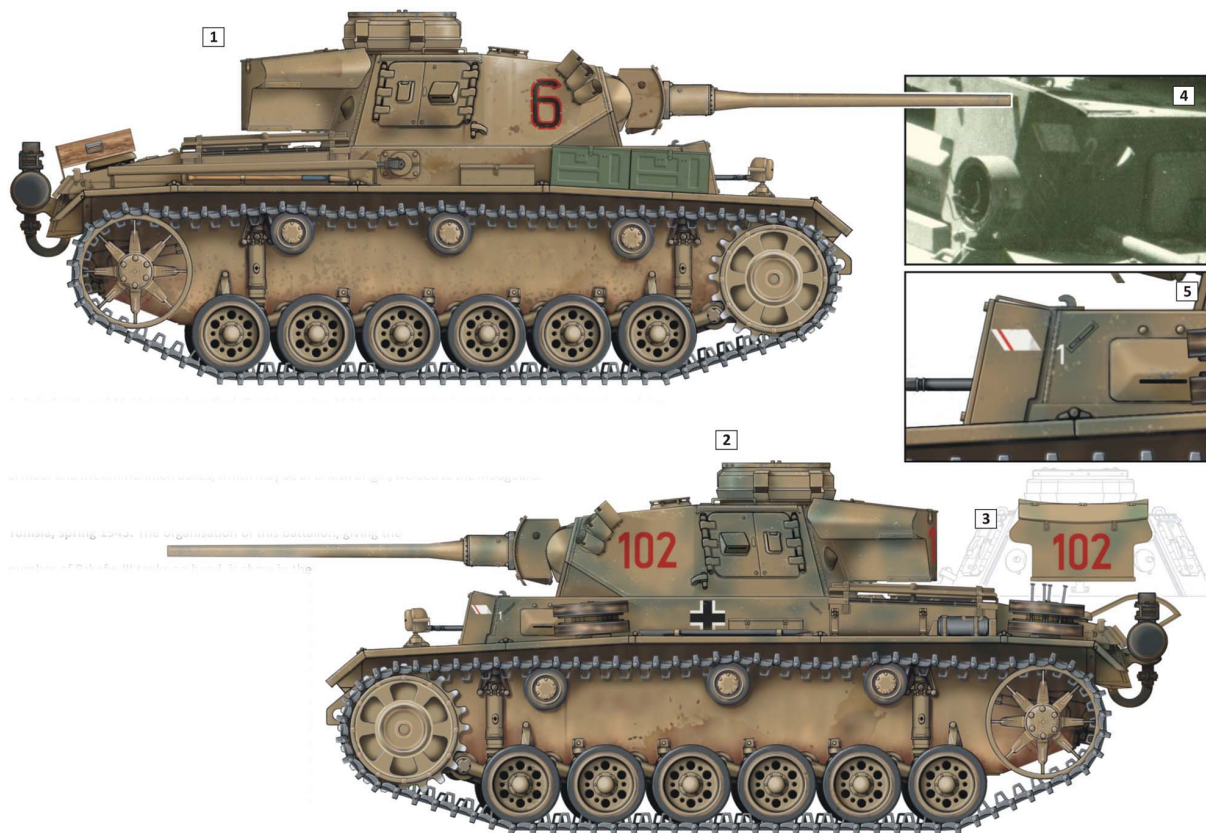
1 and 2. Pzkwf III ausf J. I. Abteilung, Panzer-Regiment 5. February, 1943. Said to have been photographed during the battles around Kasserine Pass, these vehicles must have been two of just a handful of the 5cm L/42-equipped tanks with the regiment at that time. Both appear to be painted in a base coat of RAL 8000 with no disruptive camouflage. The large shield device (3) on the turret side of the 1. Kompanie tank is slightly conjectural as it is partly obscured in our photograph (4) and may have been unique to this vehicle. The number 112 is visible on the Rommelkiste stowage box in another image from the same series. The 7. Kompanie Pzkwf III was fitted with Vorpanzer armour on the hull and gun mantlet but as was often the case the front section was missing from the latter. The company number 733 was repeated on the rear of the stowage box (5).

6. Pzkwf III ausf N. Stab, I. Abteilung, Panzer-Regiment 5. February, 1943. Supplies of this model began arriving as replacement vehicles in North Africa in October 1942 and by the early months of the following year the regiment had as many as seventy-five on hand. The large roman numeral identifying the battalion headquarters was repeated on the turret stowage box (7) and although their use had been strictly forbidden from November 1941, command pennants could be seen in use until the end of the North African campaign.



1. Pzkw III ausf J. 1. Kompanie, Panzer-Regiment 7. Tunisia, spring 1943. The marking system used by this regiment remained unchanged from the earliest days of the campaign until the Axis surrender. The large number 3 on the turret side was usually repeated on the rear of the Rommelkiste stowage box (2) and identified the company. The full number, employing the standard three-digit system, was carried on the lower portion of the turret side by many tanks but was often omitted. Note the regiment's insignia (3) and the so-called Afrikakorps palm formation badge (4) on the hull side. Pzkw III ausf J tanks armed with the long-barrelled 5cm L/60 gun were later renamed as Pzkw III ausf L as explained in the Technical Details and Modifications section of this book.

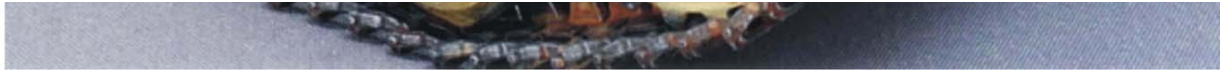
5. Pzkw III ausf L. 1. Kompanie, Panzer-Regiment 7. Tunisia, spring 1943. The tanks of this regiment were identified by a single large number denoting the company with the vehicle's individual number rendered below that in either red or black. Note the unusual style of the 3. Kompanie marking (6). The wooden box on the right side mudguard was fitted to most, if not all, the regiment's Pzkw III and Pzkw IV tanks but could vary in size and construction. Note how sections have been cut out of the wooden side to allow access to the mudguard hinges. These tanks may also have carried the charging bison unit insignia of 10. Panzer-Division and company number on the rear of the turret stowage box in the same style as the Pzkw III ausf J shown on [page 19](#) but the rearview is not visible in the photographs on which these illustrations are based.



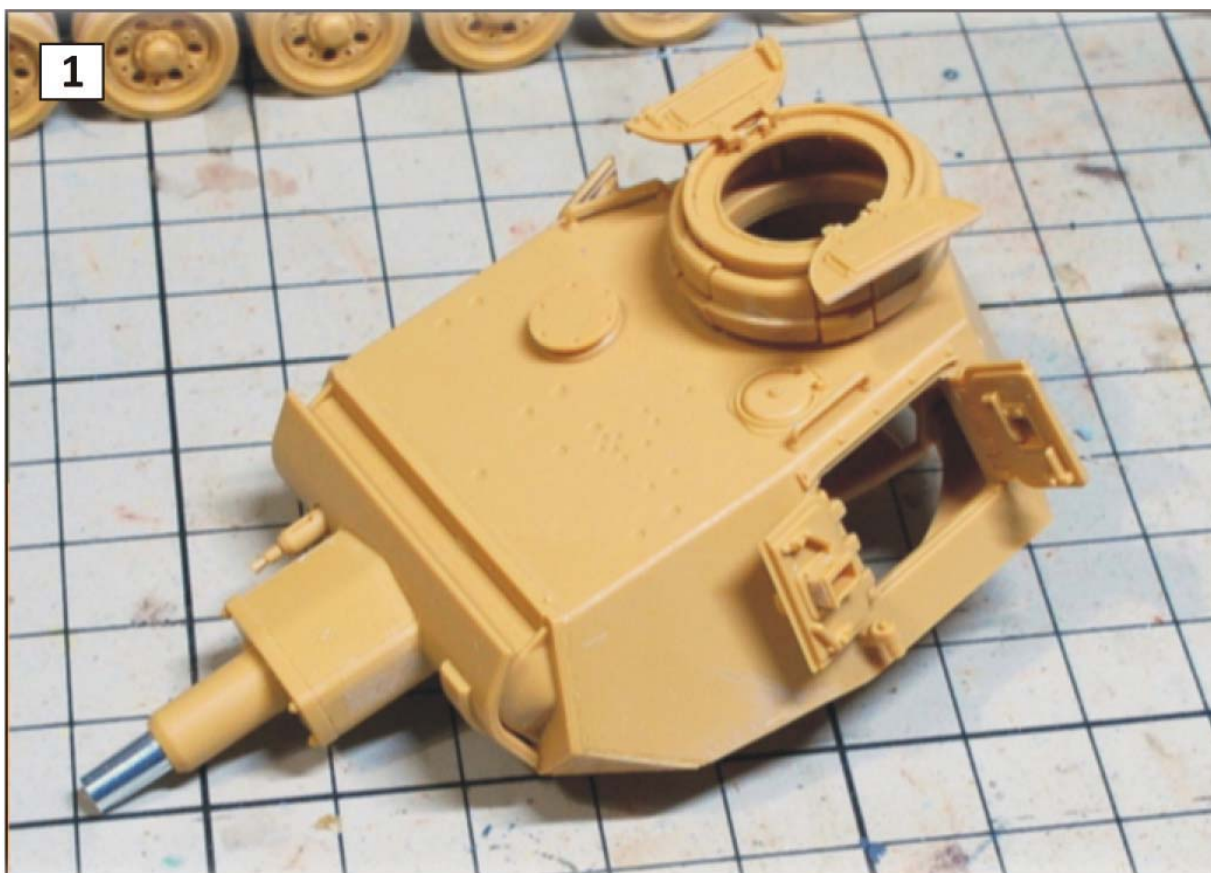
1. Pzkw III ausf M. Unit unidentified. Tunisia, spring 1943. Photographed outside Tunis in the last days of the campaign, this tank may be from 6. Kompanie, Panzer-Regiment 8. The company number on the turret side has a dark outline rendered here as red but it could also be one of the green shades available at the time. Easily identified by the deep wading exhaust, hull air intake covers and Bosch headlight, very few examples of the Pzkw III ausf M could have been shipped to North Africa before May 1943. Note the full set of Vorpanzer armour and the ammunition boxes, which may be of British origin, welded to the mudguard.

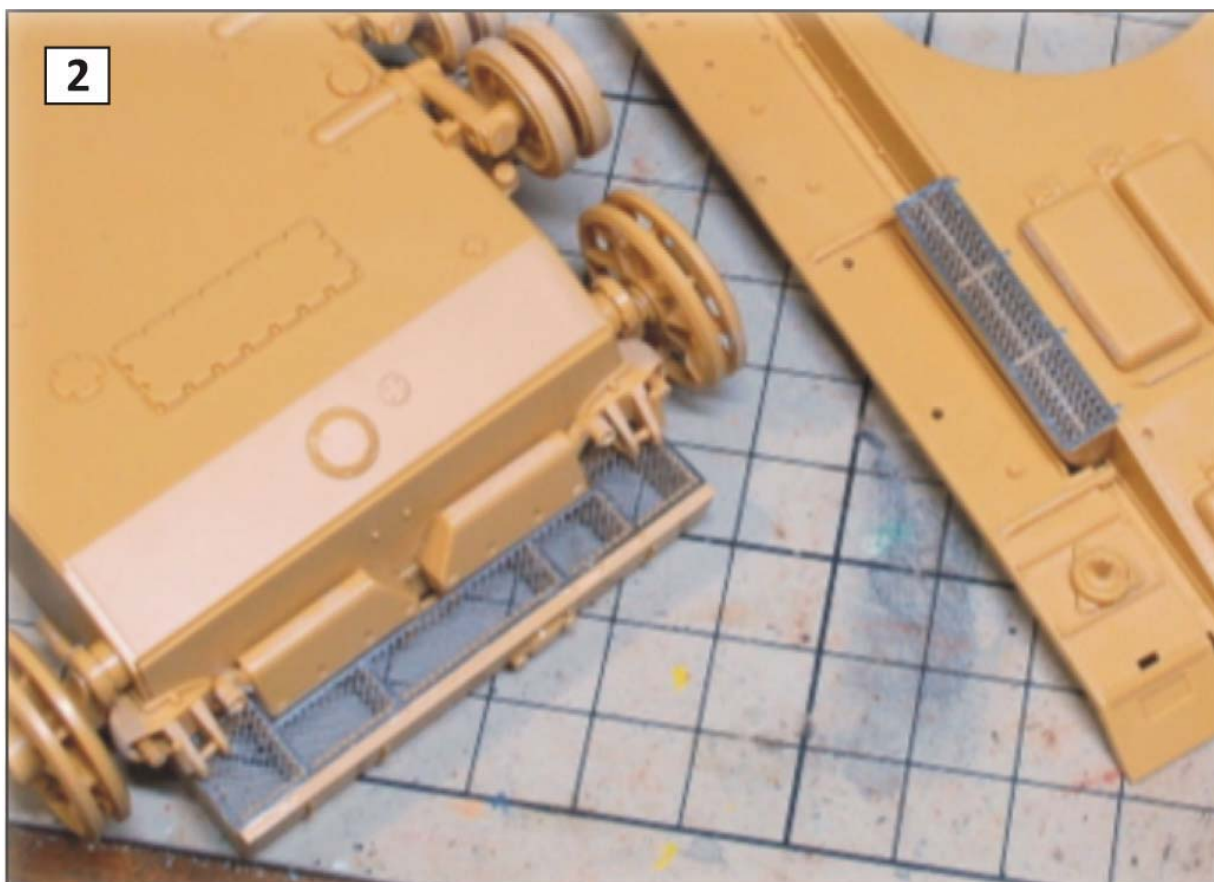
2. Pzkw III ausf M. 1. Kompanie, schwere Panzer-Abteilung 504. Tunisia, spring 1943. number of Pzkw III tanks on hand, is show in the chart on [page 63](#). Many sources suggest that the setanks were all Pzkw III ausf L models but photographs show that a number of these very late production versions were with the battalion in Tunisia. The light tanks were numbered in an identical fashion to the battalion's Tigers with the numbers rendered in red and repeated on the rear of the stowage box (3). Note the rack on the rear hull. Veterans' accounts confirm that as many as four light tanks were commandeered from 2. Kompanie, which remained in Italy, and one of these was photographed in the La Mornaghia cemetery, south-east of Tunis, where it was abandoned. The tactical symbol and 2. Kompanienumber can be clearly seen in a photograph taken in 1943 (4). The same marking, as applied to 1. Kompanie tanks, is shown below that (5).





Kentaro's replica is based on the Tamiya 1/35 scale Pzkw III ausf N kit which utilises parts of the Pzkw III ausf L model, first released in 1997, with new features added in 2008. The kit includes some photo-etched parts, notably the wire mesh guards for the air intakes, and a turned aluminium 7.5cm gun barrel. The numerous tool clamps are photo-etched parts from ABER.









Details of the complete assembly including the turret, with workable hatches (1), photo-etched mesh screens (2), the finished track assembly using AFV Club single link tracks (3) and the kit's gun barrel (4). Note the detailed rifling of the latter.











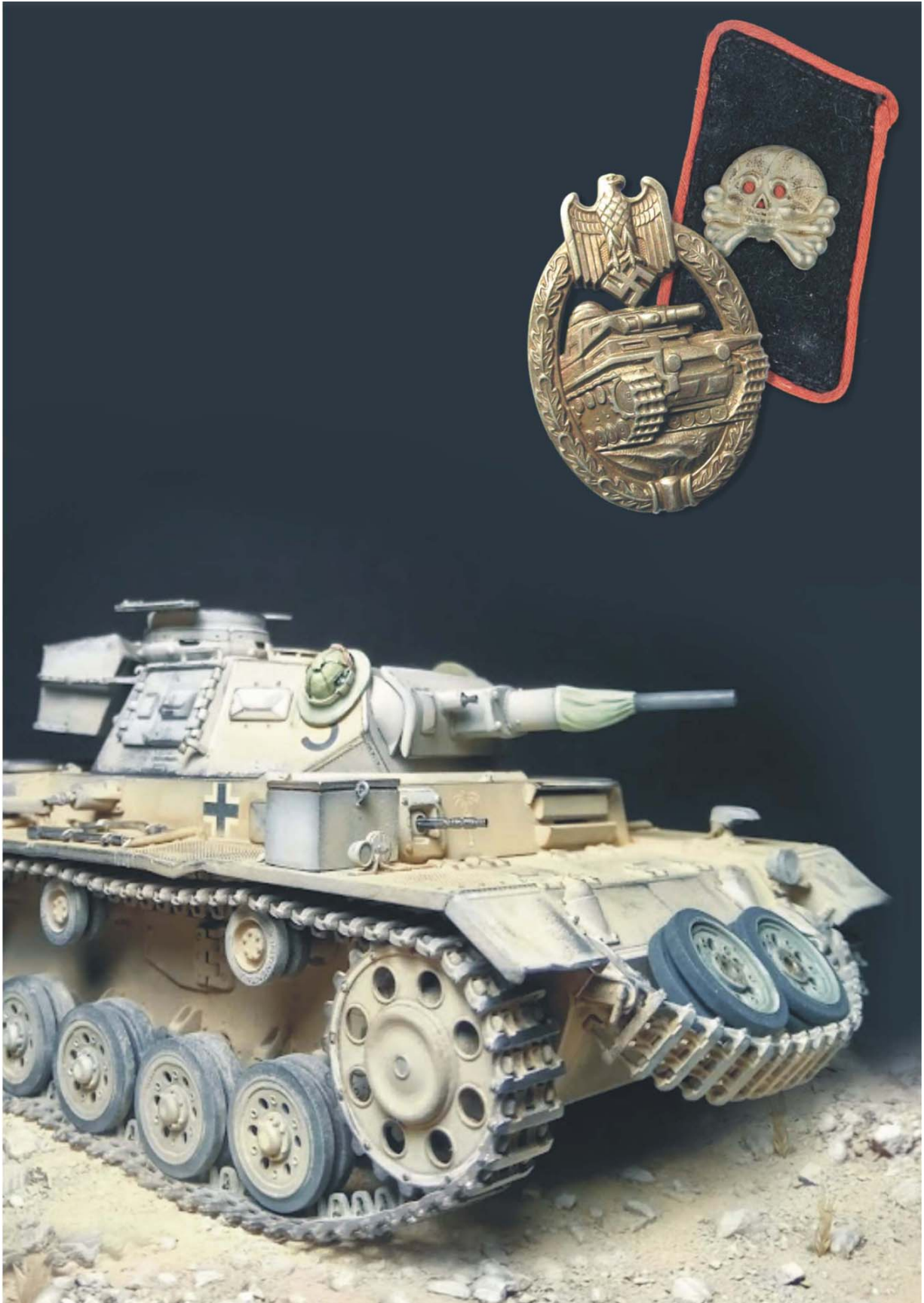
The fully-assembled model after it was airbrushed with Kentaro's own mixture of Dark Yellow and Sand using Tamiya acrylic paints. Above: This model was Kentaro's first attempt at the so-called hairspray technique where the model is painted in a dark shade, here Panzer Grey, and then hairspray or fixative is applied to the edges and exposed surfaces. The model is then painted with a lighter colour and the hairspray removed leaving a chipped and worn appearance. The markings are those supplied with the kit.



A front view of the completed model representing a vehicle of Panzer-Regiment 8. The markings were applied as waterslide transfers and are included in the kit.



Another view of Kentaro's Pzkw III ausf N. The hatch of the commander's cupola and the turret side access doors are all workable, operating on scratch-built wire hinges.

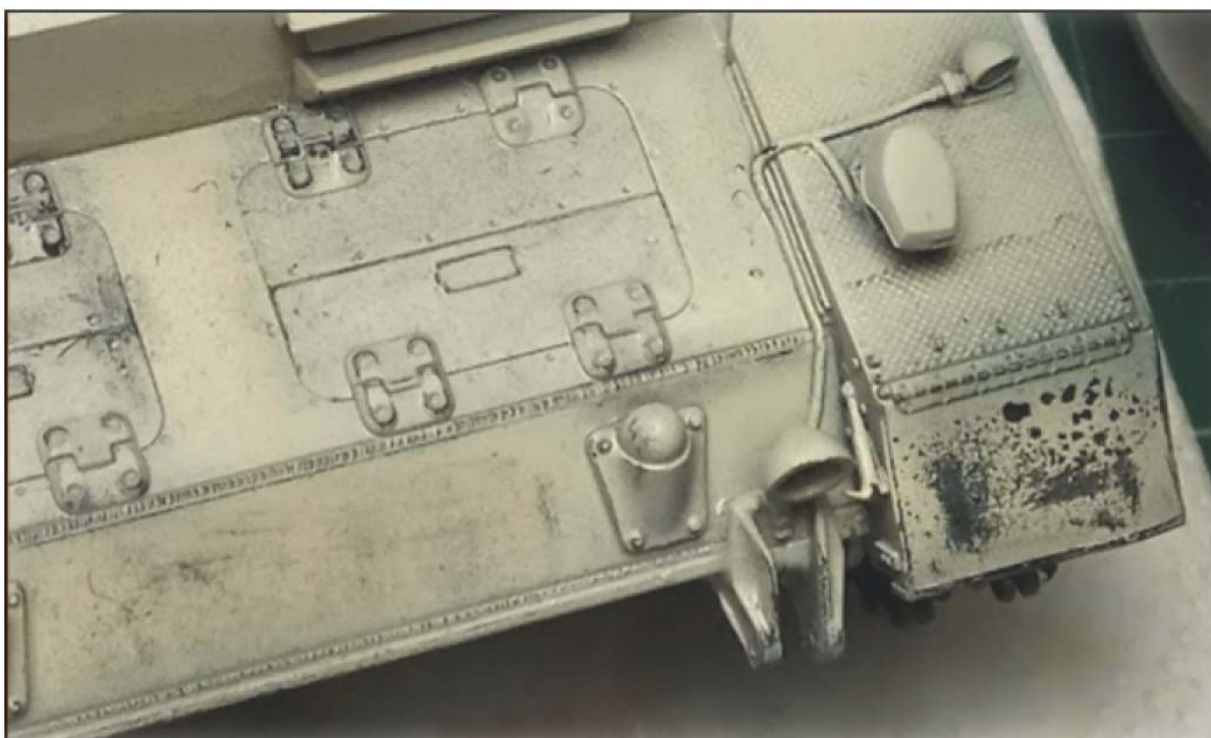


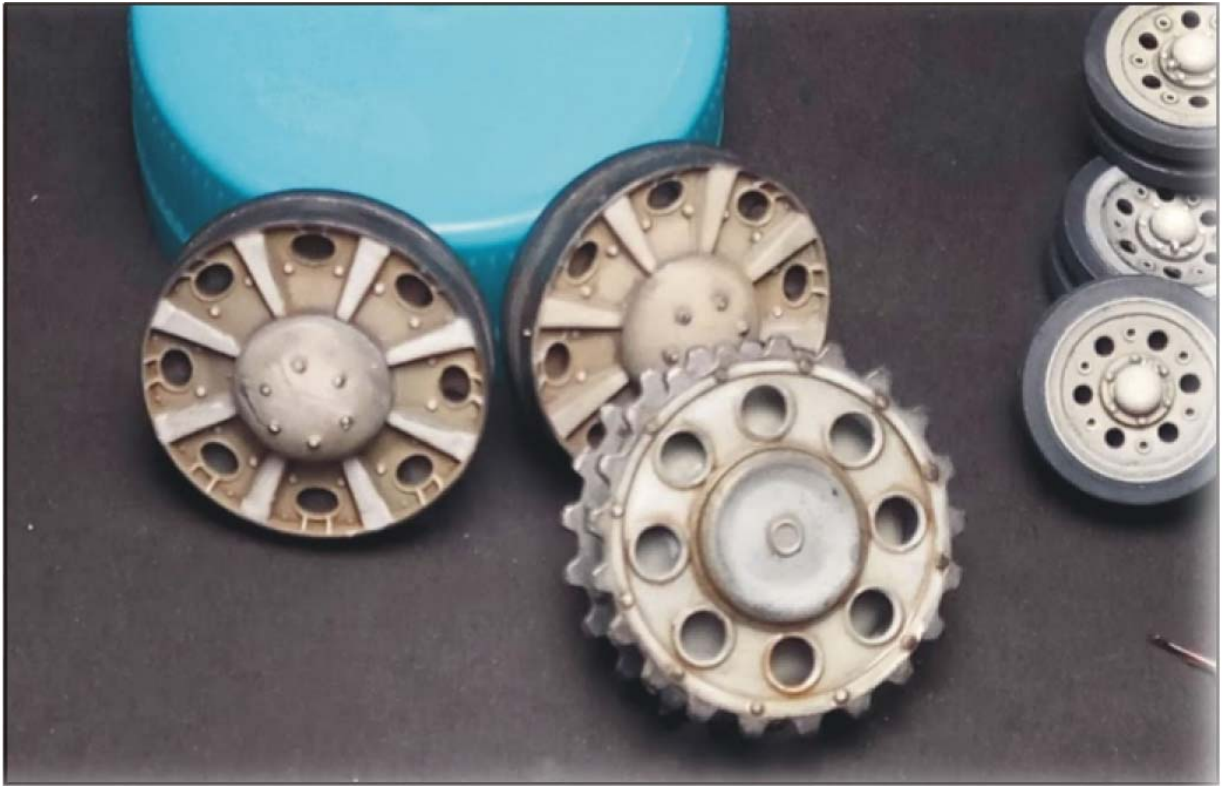


Luca's model is based on the Dragon Models' 1/35 scale kit, shown at left, which includes photo-etched brass parts for the air intake mesh grills, the chains of the smoke grenade dischargers on the hull rear and other fine details. Luca has upgraded the vehicle with the 5cm L/42 gun and manlet, as were the tanks shipped to North Africa.

The assembled model was primed with Gunze Dunkelgrau RAL and then treated with hairspray in selected areas. A coat of Lifecolor RAL 8020 was gradually lightened with Lifecolor Matt White with touches of Rosa Vallejo Opaco and Aged White after which the deposits of hairspray were removed with various brushes.











Once the base coats had dried Luca applied thinned oil paints in a series of washes to begin the simulation of the weathering caused by the heat and sand of North Africa. This was a labourious process and Gray, Buff, Sunny Flesh Tone, Light Sand, Faded Flesh, Snow White, Brown Wash and Faded Dark Yellow, all from the Abteilung 502 range, were used. Lastly Mig Oil Brushers were applied to blend the colours and impart an appearance of wear to the vehicle's armour plates.





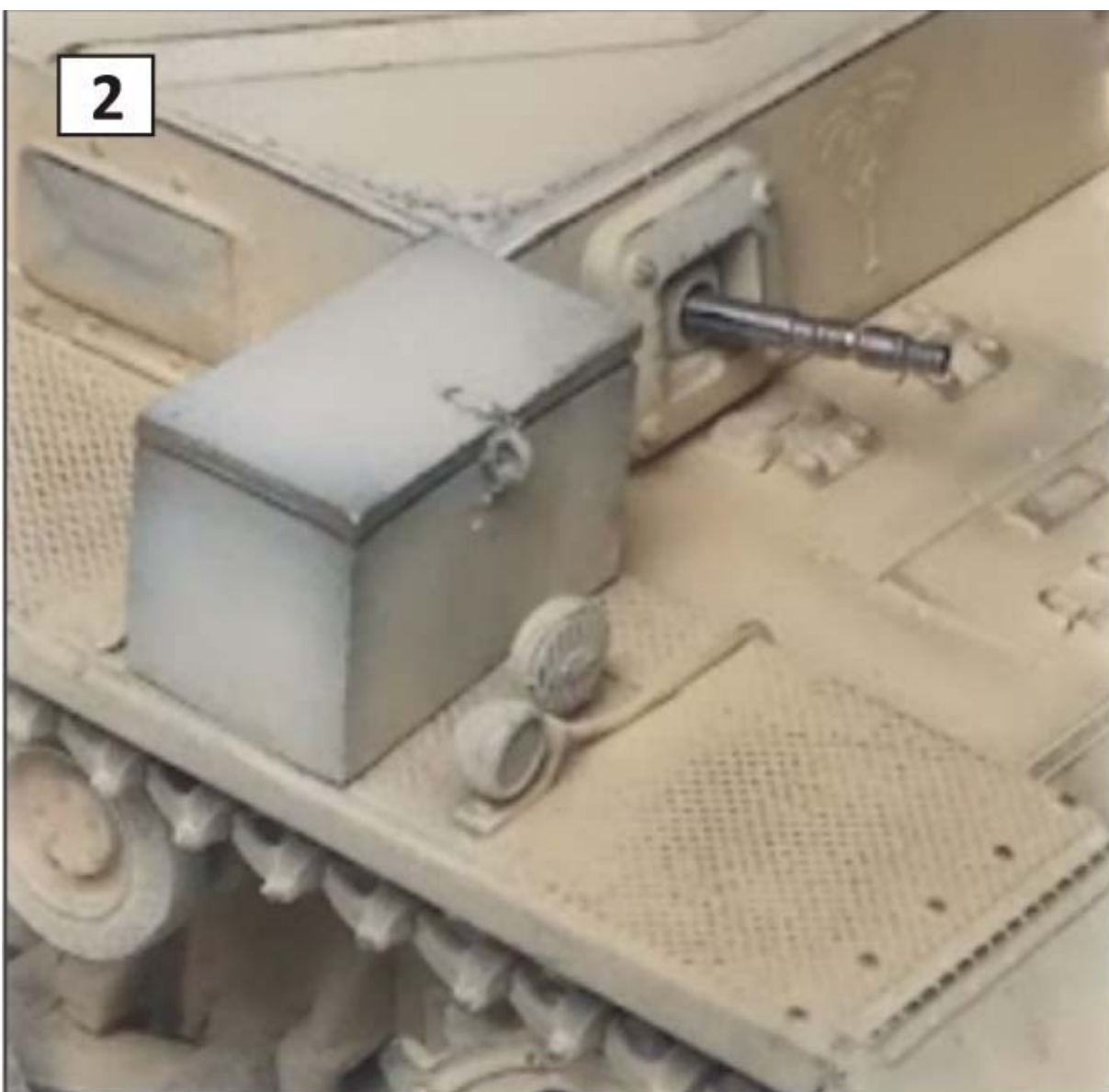


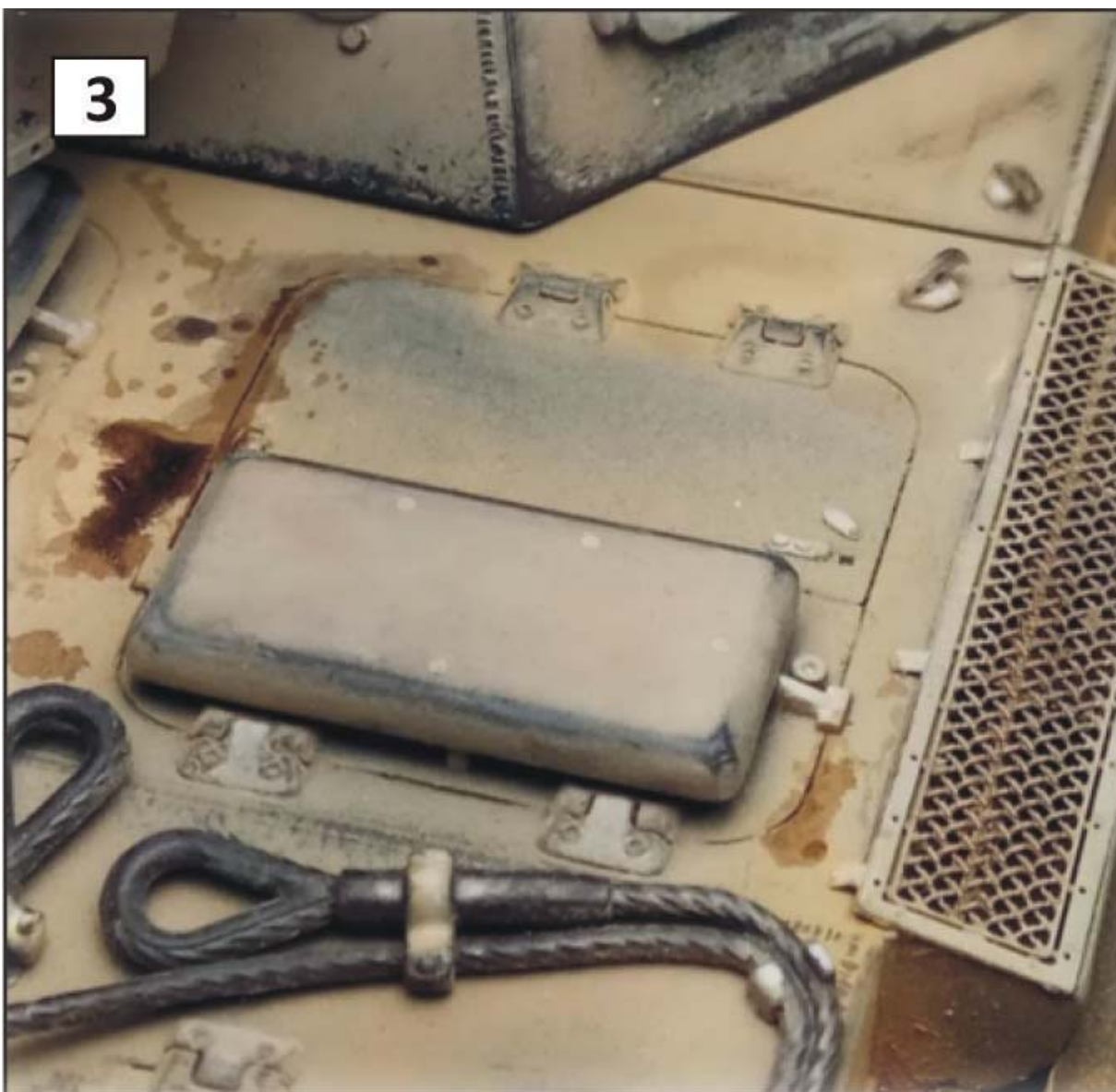
Luca is fortunate enough to have toured the battlefields of the Western Desert on several occasions and has first-hand experience of the terrain. Small rocks and pebbles were selected that would have a correct scale appearance and together with fine sand they were glued to the model's base. The ground was then treated with the same paints used to weather the Pzkw III.



The completed model on its scenic base with close-up shots of some of the details. 1. The 5cm gun with its canvas protective cover. Note also the rain guard over the driver's visor. 2. The type of stowage box that was regularly fitted to tanks of Panzer-Regiment 8 in North Africa. 3. The armoured cover of the ventilation hatch with a number of oil spills. 4. Two road wheels held in place on the hull front by a length of track. This was a very common modification in North Africa. 5. The turret stowage box fixed to the turret by metal brackets. 6. The front fender and tracks.









5



6





In late 1942 the workshops of 90. Afrika-Division produced one of the rarest armoured vehicles of the war by combining the chassis and hull of a Pzkw III ausf H with a 15cm Infanteriegeschütz 33 L/11 howitzer. Although strictly beyond the remit of this book, Luca very generously offered a number of photographs of his model and it is far too good to leave out. Based on the Dragon Models kit, it includes many scratch-built parts including a detailed interior.

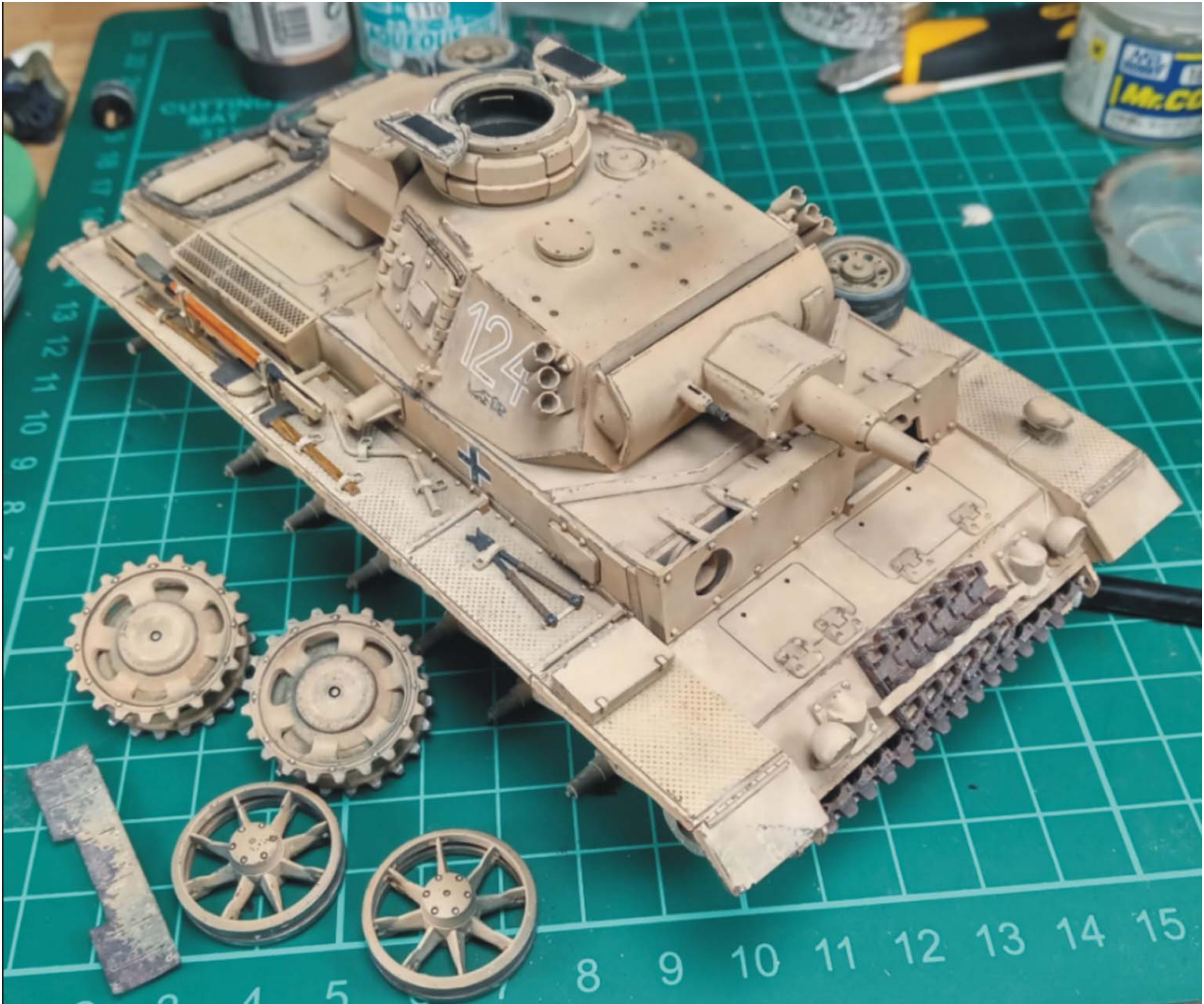


Just one of these conversions was completed and although it was photographed many times its eventual fate is unknown. It is believed to have served with schwere Infanteriegeschütz-Kompanie (Sfl) 708, a semi-independent unit attached to Panzergrenadier-Regiment 200, first going into action in September 1942.





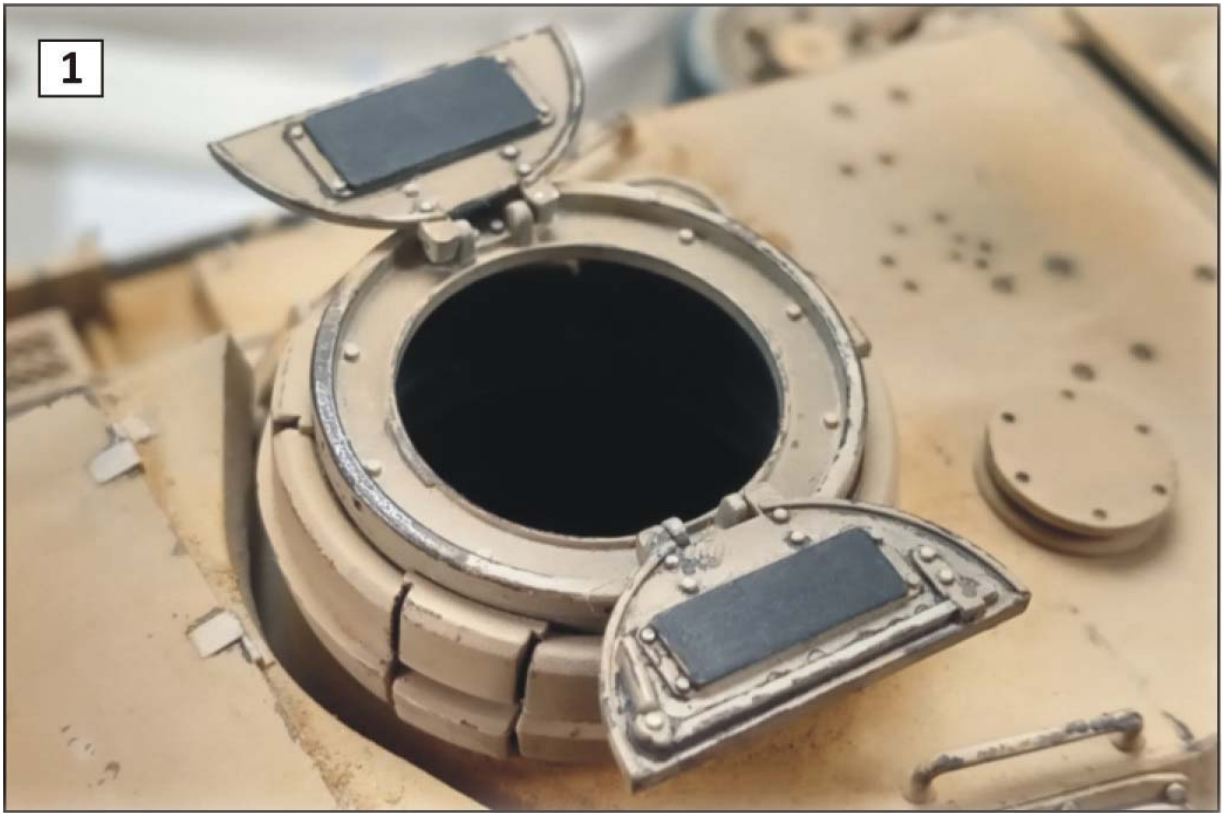
Daiji's model is based on the Tamiya 1/35 scale kit with photo-etched brass brackets and clasps for the tools from Polish company ABER. I was very pleased to see that an old project of mine was used as a reference.



The partly-assembled model was first painted in a primer coat of Tamiya's Panzer Grey. Once that had dried a comprehensive covering using Gaia Color Grau Grün darkened with Mr Color Titans Blue was applied and lastly, varying shades of Tamiya Lacquer PL 74 Flat Earth and LP 77 Light Brown formed the final camouflage.



Daiji's finished model. After the markings were applied the complete vehicle was sprayed with Mr Hobby Premium Top Coat. The weathered effects were obtained with a series of applications of different shades of Vallejo Wash and Mr Weathering Color. The tracks, which are the continuous length rubber type that come with the kit, were treated with the same products.







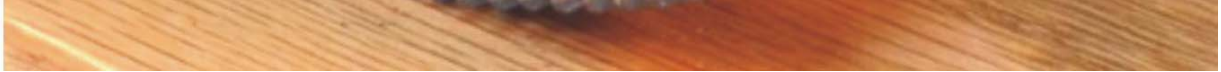
Small details, such as the cushion pads on the hatch interior (1), spare wheels (2) and tools (3) were painted by hand with a fine brush. The build-up of dirt on the hull side (4) was achieved by applying partly-dried Humbol Matt 63 Sand enamel paint.

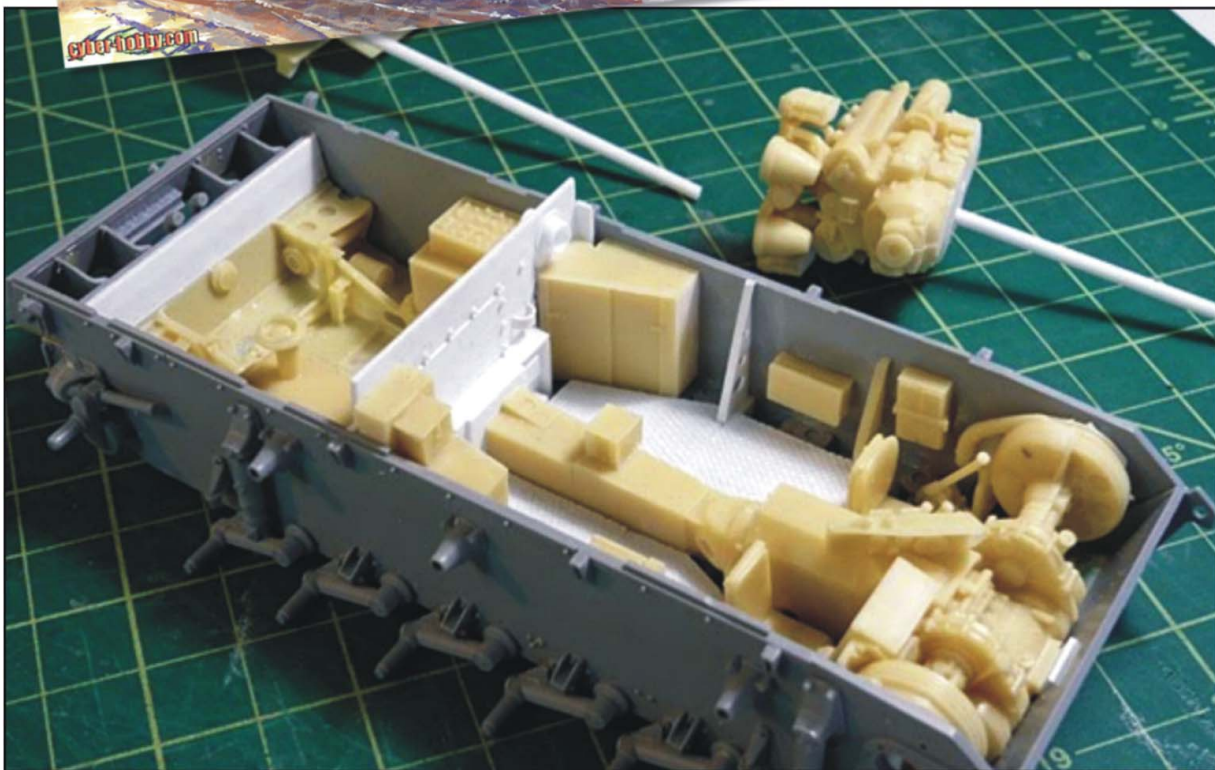




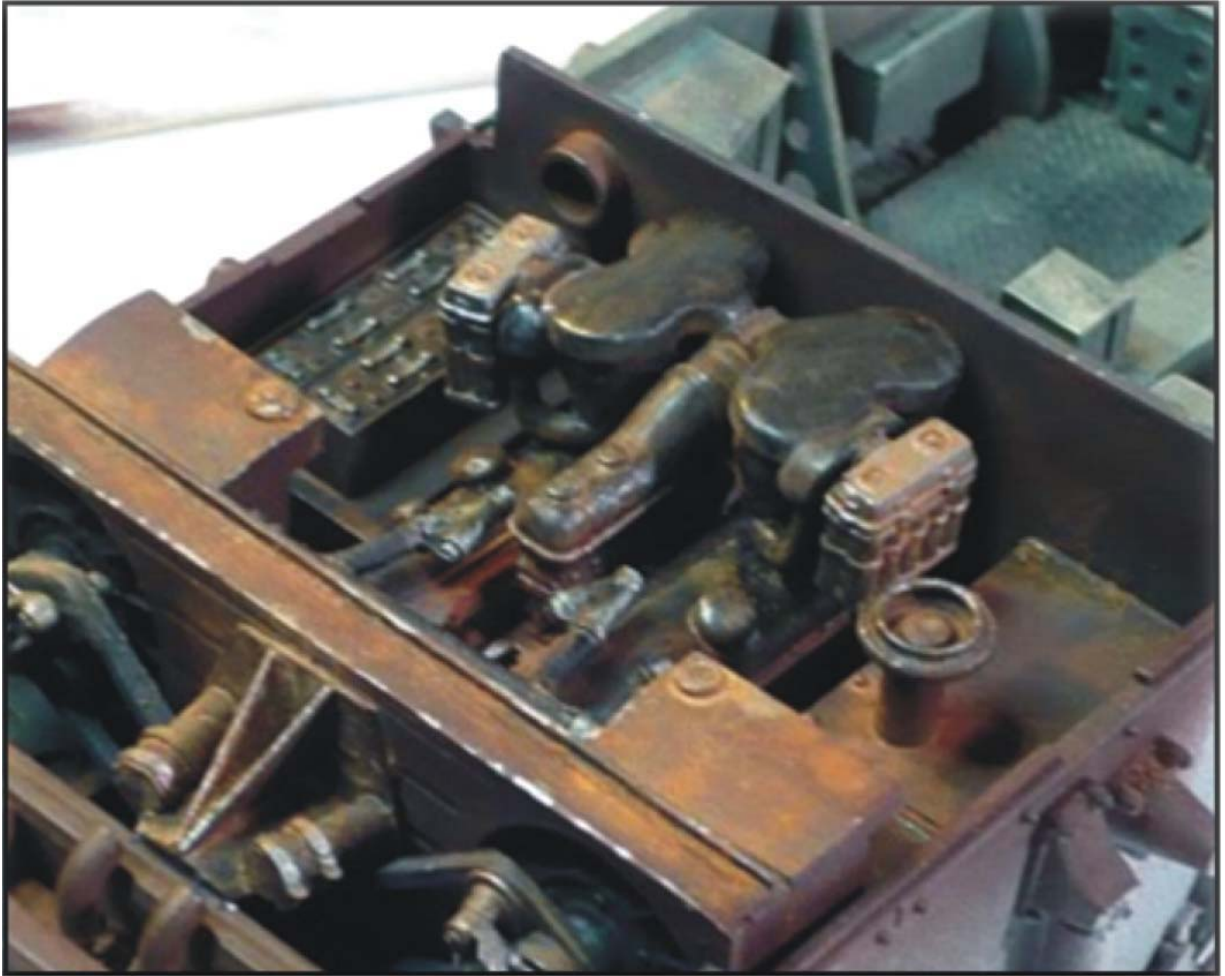
The completed model pictured with the commander in his cupola. The crew figure was painted by hand using Vic Hobby Acrylics, a relatively new range of paint from Japan that focuses mainly on armoured vehicle colours. The markings, which are included with the kit, depict a vehicle of 1. Kompanie, schwere Panzer-Abteilung 501 and the tanks of this battalion are discussed further in the Camouflage & Markings section of this book.

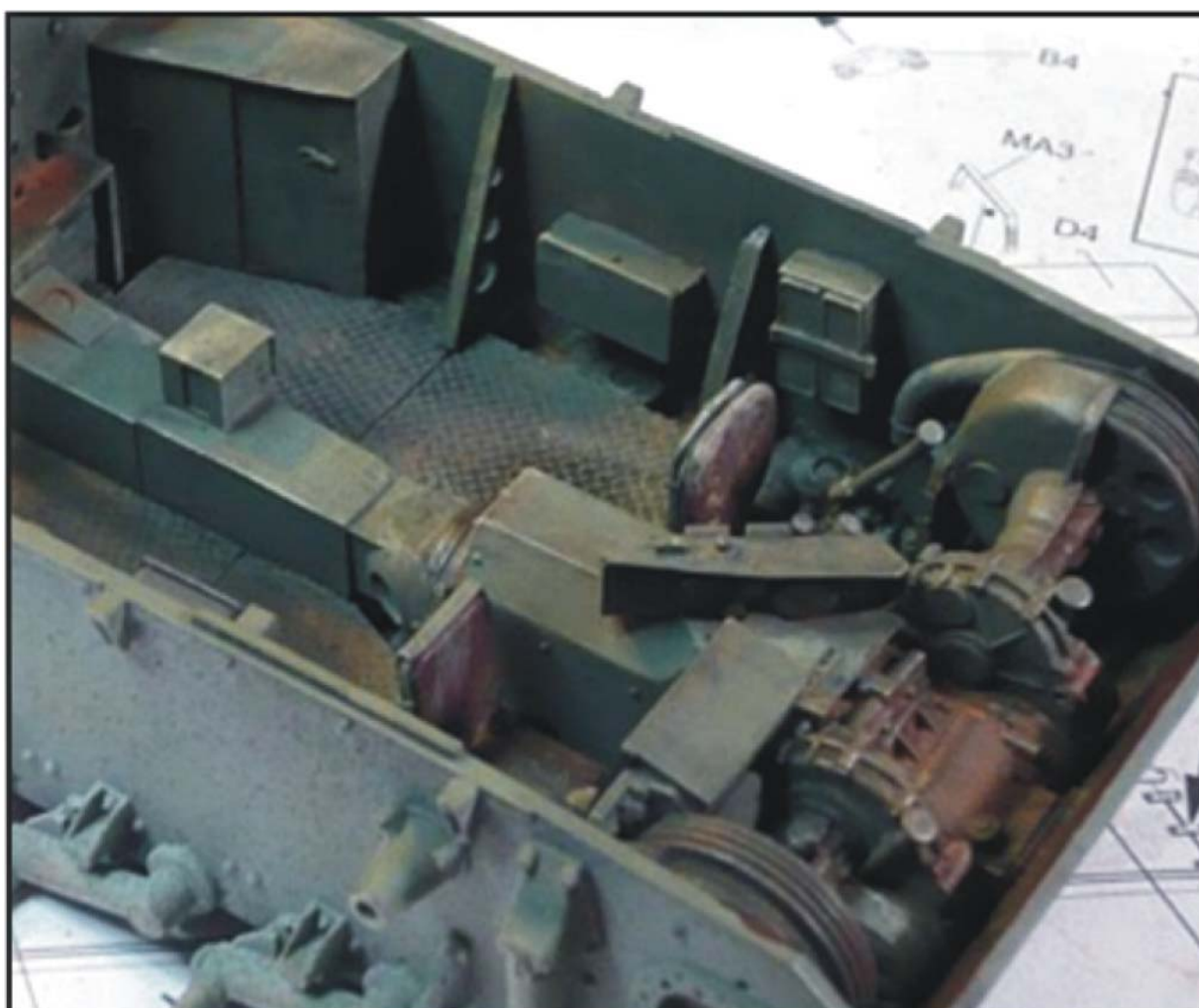


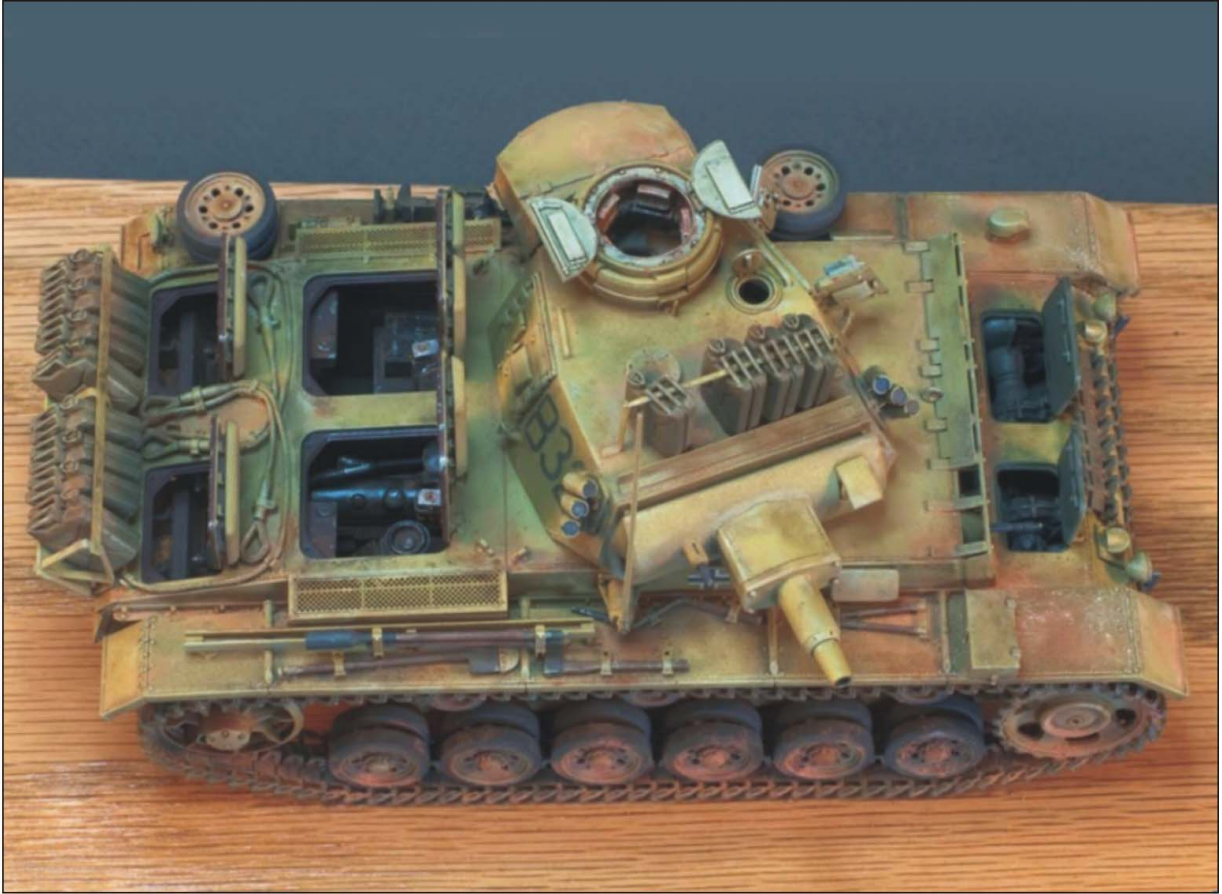




Nathan's model is based on the Dragon Models Pz.Kpfw. III ausf. N kit which was first released in 2007 and is intended to depict a tank of schwere Panzer Abteilung 501. The resin interior and engine details are by Verlinden and while the company states that they are compatible with both the Tamiya and Dragon kits, Nathan found that quite a number of adjustments needed to be made to the resin parts. The firewalls and floor were scratch-built from sheet styrene. The interior was primed with Mr Surfacer 1200 and the engine compartment, engine and radiator assemblies were painted in a red-brown shade. Fine details were picked out with a fine brush and the entire assembly was drybrushed in metallic colours. Lastly, it was weathered with pigments from AMMO by Mig.







Once assembled, the model was airbrushed with a coat of Dark Yellow and small details, such as tools and clasps, were picked out by hand. The road wheels were originally painted in German Grey, and then, using a plastic circle template as a mask, the centres were sprayed the same dark yellow shade used on the hull and turret.



After the base coats were complete a slightly darker yellow mix was sprayed into the nooks, crannies and corners and this was followed by a light pass of the airbrush with a light tan to help emphasise raised details. After painting, the model was weathered with extensive applications of powdered pigments mixed with thinners. The tracks, which are individual links, were painted separately and then attached to then suspension.

The Pzkw III tank has been a favourite with modellers since the first kits were released in the 1960s, although these early replicas were by any standard very inaccurate representations. It was at least a decade before Tamiya launched a range of models, including a totally new kit marketed as a Panzerkampfwagen III Ausf. M/N, which offered a reasonable degree of detail and accuracy. At about the same time, companies such as Otaki, Hasegawa and Fujimi in Japan, ESCI in Italy and Matchbox in Britain began releasing kits of the Pzkw III in 1/35, 1/72 and 1/76 scale and, for their day, these were all quite good models. ESCI in particular led the way in a number of respects including the introduction of hard plastic link-and-length tracks which, rather surprisingly, have never replaced the so-called rubber band types. Many of these old kits have been re-boxed and released under the logos of several companies and are still on offer today. In 1987 Gunze Sangyo from Japan released a series of highly detailed replicas and these models, although somewhat expensive, really were groundbreaking.

Importantly, they introduced the concept of a multimedia kit which, in addition to plastic sprues, contained photo-etched brass and white metal details and optional barrels in turned aluminium. The company's first offering was a 1/35 scale Pzkw III ausf J and this model formed the basis for the extensive range of kits later released by Dragon Models. This is the third book in this series on the Pzkw III and the available models, and model accessories, depicting the early variants have been covered in *TankCraft 27: Panzer III: German Army Light Tank Operation Barbarossa, 1941* and the opening stages of the North African campaign in *TankCraft 36: Panzer III: German Army Light Tank North Africa, Tripoli to El Alamein, 1941-1942*. Therefore I have limited this section to the major manufacturers and increased the number of pages in the Model Showcase section. For those readers who may not have access to the earlier titles I have included an index of manufacturers, including those featured in the first two books, with their contact details on [page 64](#).

TAMIYA INC

This Japanese company, the largest model manufacturer in the world, has produced a large range of armoured vehicles, with complementary figures and accessories, and was almost solely responsible for the rise in popularity of 1/35 scale. Although rather basic by today's standards, the kits released from the early 1970s were highly accurate and detailed when compared to what else was available at the time. Importantly, they were easy to build and affordable and, like Airfix before them, Tamiya kits were all made to a common scale which encouraged modellers to build a collection. The company's near monopoly of the 1/35 scale market remained unchallenged until the release of the first Dragon Models kits in 1987. In 2003 Tamiya began releasing models in 1/48 scale and this has been extremely successful for the company, combining the potential for a high level of detail without the expense of the bigger kits. The current catalogue lists a Pzkw III ausf L and ausf N in both 1/35 and 1/48 scale and I should mention that they cannot be built as the earlier versions without extra parts.



Tamiya's 1/35 scale Pzkwf III ausf N built and painted according to the kit instructions as a vehicle of I. Abteilung, Panzer-Regiment 8. At right, detailed shots of the Tamiya 1/48 scale Pzkwf III ausf L model assembled with the detail set from Hauler. The bottom image shows the same model with Hauler's Pzkwf III ausf M conversion parts.

DRAGON MODELS LTD

Dragon Models was one of the first of the major manufacturers to offer accurate replicas in 1/35 scale and their kits are today something of a benchmark. The company's small scale releases are some of the best available. At the time of writing this Hong Kong-based company offered in 1/35 scale a Pzkwf III ausf E/F, an ausf G, which can be built as a Tauchpanzer or with the Tropen air intakes suitable for a North African tank, an ausf H in early and late production versions and also as a Befehlspanzerwagen, and an ausf J and ausf M in both 1/35 and 1/72 scale which can be built as a number of variants. All these kits have been re-boxed and re-released at some time, usually with different markings.



Above, from left to right: Dragon Models' 1/35 scale Pz.Kpfw III ausf H and the Pz.Kpfw III ausf J and Pz.Kpfw III ausf M, both in 1/72 scale. All these versions are appropriate for the later stages of the North African campaign.

At right: Dragon Models' Pz.Kpfw III ausf N in 1/35 scale built with the resin accessory set from Black Dog.

ITALERI

The company's current catalogue contains a 1/72scale model kit of the Pz.Kpfw III ausf M (1), a small number of which were shipped to North Africa and took part in the fighting in Tunisia, with optional parts for the Pz.Kpfw III ausf N. This kit was originally released by ESCI in 1977 but it was quite a detailed and accurate kit for the time. Italeri's Fast-Assembly range offers a Pz.Kpfw III which can be built as an ausf J or ausf L (2). Of the large model manufacturers Italeri alone has ventured into 1/56 scale

with a Pzkw III model which can be built as multiple versions (3). This scale complements 28mm wargames figures of which there are now quite a number on the market.



2



3



RYE FIELD MODEL

A relatively new model company based in Hong Kong, Rye Field Model made an impressive entry to be the first in a series and features a fully detailed the market with the release of three highly detailed interior. A less expensive kit omits the interior but kits depicting Tiger I variants in the short space of both have workable tracks and torsion bar time between September 2015 and February 2016. suspension.



At right: Rye Field Model's 1.35 scale Pzkwf III ausf J.

Below: Details of the same kit including the photo-etched brass air intake screens and tool box, cupola interior with periscopes and Vorpanzer add-on-armor.

PANZER ART

Based in Poland, this company produces a large range of resin parts for Second World War and modern era armoured vehicles in 1/35 scale. Shown here, are: 1. Canvas cover, mantlet and brass MG 34 machine gun barrel for the early 3.7cm main gun. 2. Canvas cover and gun mantlet for the 5cm gun. This weapon was fitted to all the Pzkwf III gun tanks that arrived in North Africa in 1941. 3. Later-style drive sprocket which was introduced towards the end of the Pzkwf III ausf G production.

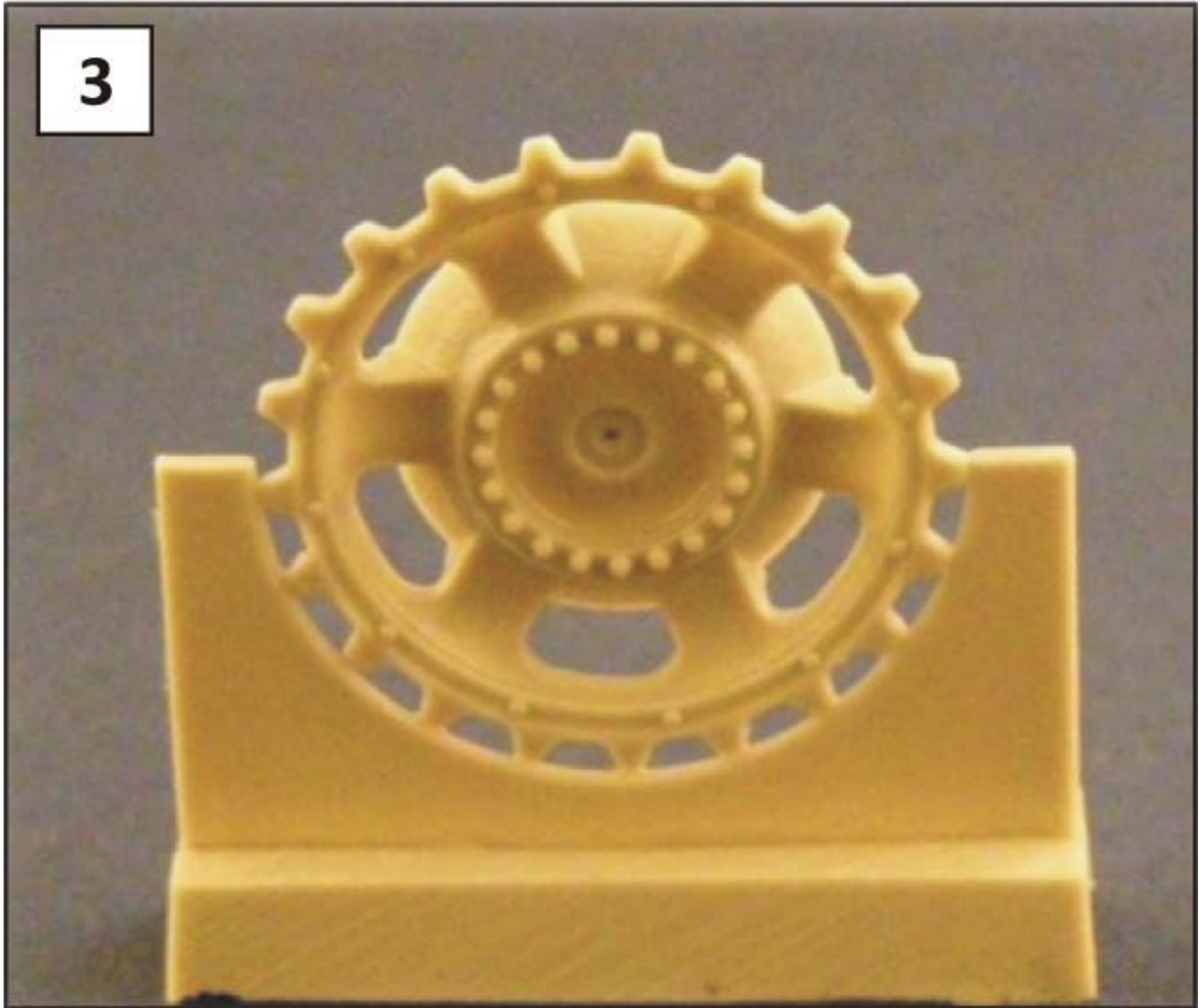
1



2



3



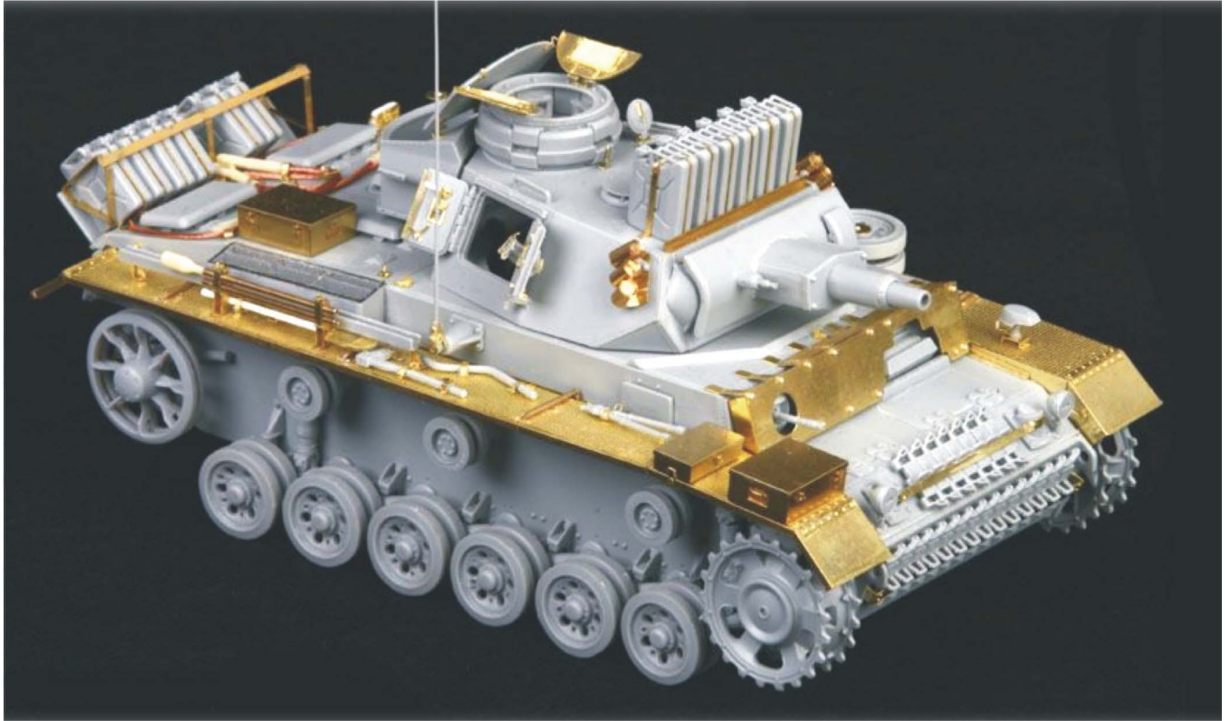
ACADEMY PLASTIC MODELS

Based in Korea, this company offers a large range of etched brass details, optional parts for both military vehicle kits and scale figures. The armament and exhaust systems and link-and company's Pzkw III ausf J is a completely new kit length tracks. In addition there are nine marking released in the last few months and includes photo options, all for tanks which served in North Africa.



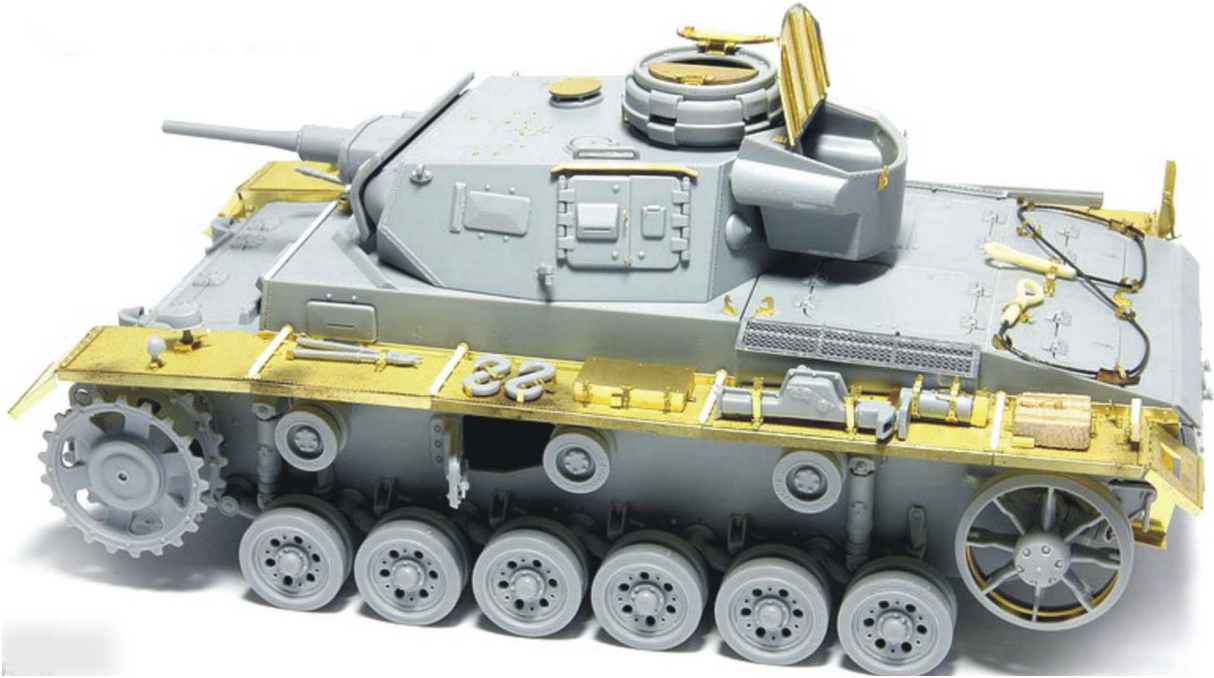
VOYAGER MODEL

Voyager Model, based in Shanghai, have been manufacturing upgrade sets for scale models since 2003 with the release of their first set for 1/35 scale armour. The company produces a number of items in both 1/72 and 1/35 scale in photo-etched brass and also resin, including wheel hubs, damaged road wheels, ammunition crates and fuel containers. Voyager also offers highly detailed and accurate gun barrels in milled aluminium and brass. Shown below is the Dragon Models' 1/35 scale Pzkw III ausf N built with Voyager's upgrade set depicting a tank of schwere Panzer-Abteilung 501 in Tunisia.



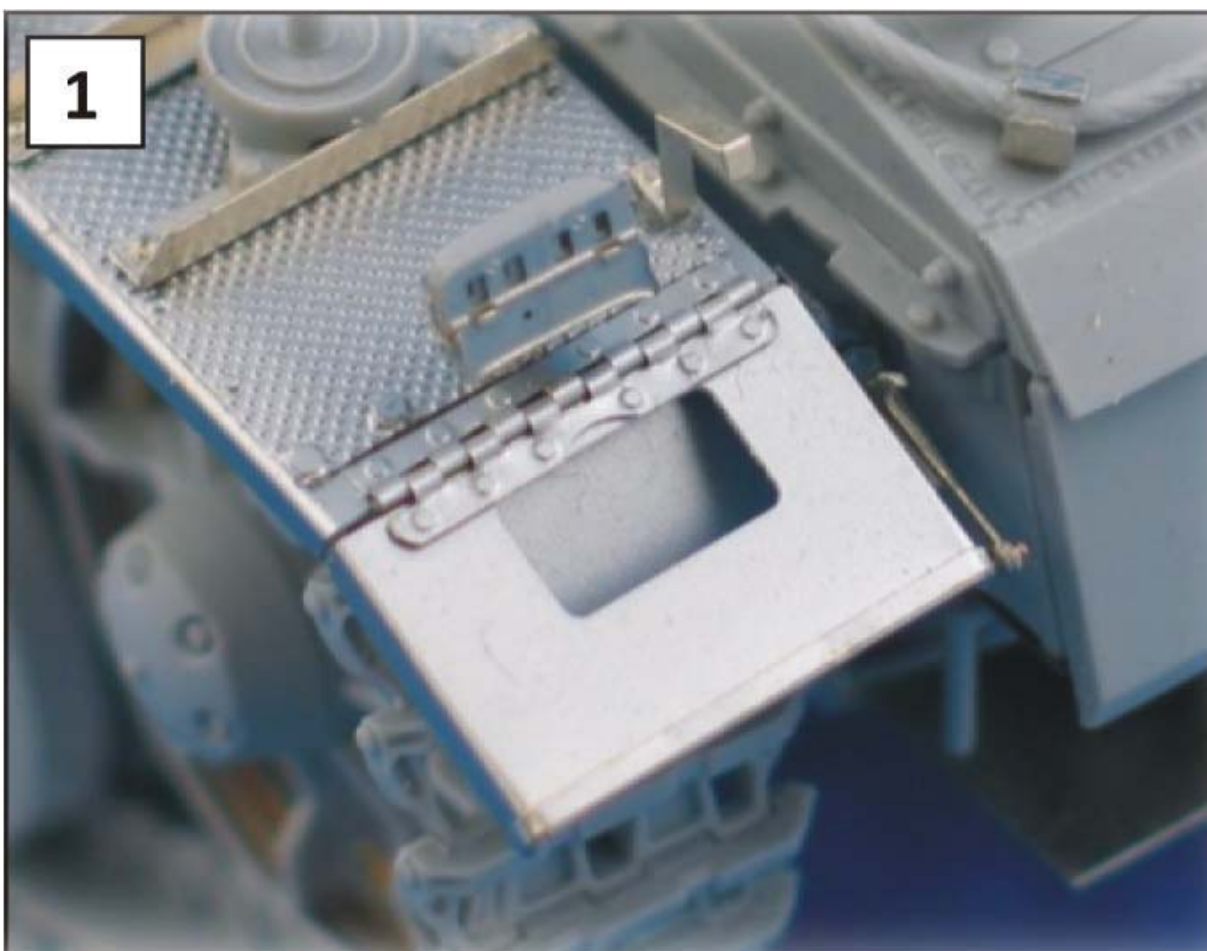
E.T. MODEL

This company, based in China, produces upgrade sets in 1/72 and 1/35 scale in photo-etched brass and resin. Although most sets are specifically designed, according to the company, to fit Dragon or Tamiya kits, some parts or accessories, for example the stowage bins, are referred to as universal. Shown below is the Dragon Models' Pzkw III ausf J built using the E.T. Model upgrade set.

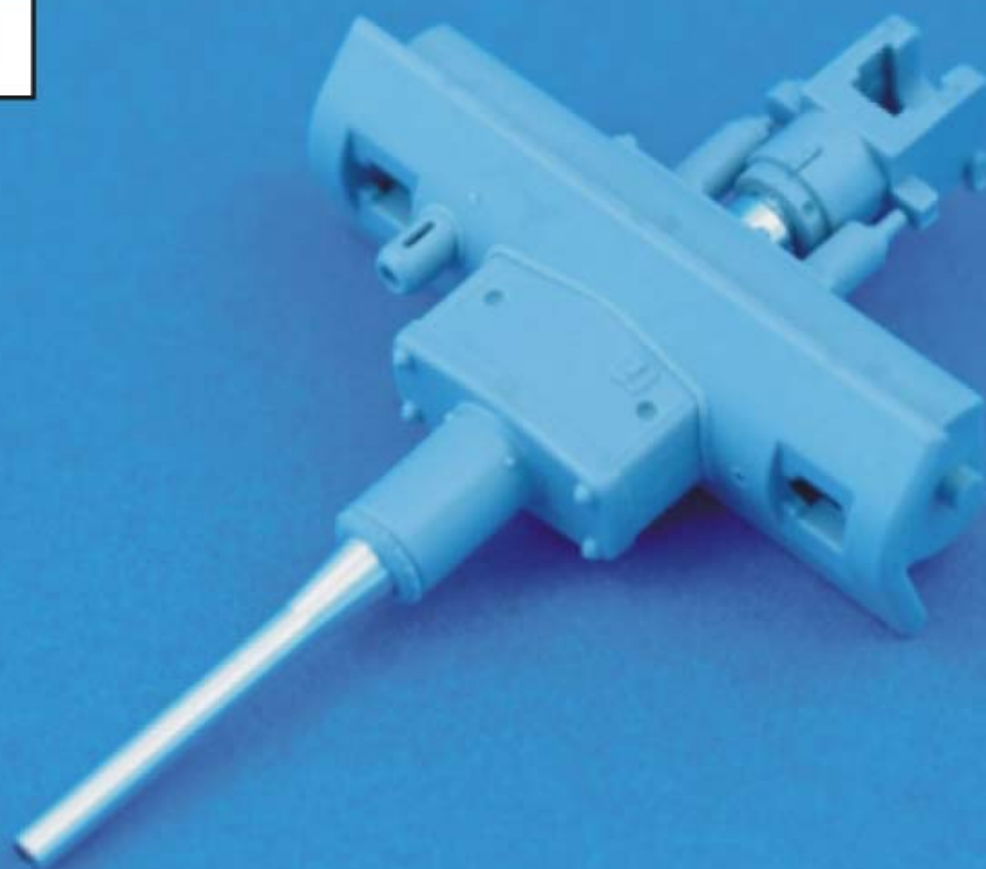


ABER

This Polish company has been manufacturing and selling upgrade sets since 1995, working in photo-etched brass, milled aluminium, stainless steel and even wood. For some time now Tamiya has included a number of Aber products with their models. A full list of the accessories made specifically for the PzKpfw III in all scales would be far too long to list on this page, particularly in light of the company's regular new releases, and the reader can find the company's contact details on [page 64](#). Shown below are. 1. Detail of the upgrade set for the 1/35 scale Dragon Models' kit. 2. A turned aluminium barrel of the 3.7cm gun in 1/35 scale. 3. A 1/35 scale PzKpfw III stowage bin in photo-etched brass.



2





RB MODEL

RB Model from Poland produce a range of milled aluminium and brass gun barrels and resin accessories for 1/72, 1/48 and 1/35 scale armour models. Shown below, from left to right, are the beautifully detailed 3.7cm and 5cm gun barrels in 1/35 scale and a tiny barrel for an MG 34 in 1/48 scale. RB Model also offers a large selection of generic accessories such as radio antennae and insulators, towing shackles and cables, ammunition crates and fuel containers.







As mentioned in *TankCraft 36: Panzer III German Army Light Tank, North Africa Tripoli to El Alamein, 1941-1942*, the first models of the Pzkw III, from the ausf A through to the ausf D, were essentially development vehicles although many of the features of these early designs became standard in the mass production models, most notably the turret and main armament. The introduction of the Pzkw III ausf E, with a completely redesigned torsion bar suspension, altered the basic silhouette considerably and it is in this configuration that the tank would be most familiar to the majority of readers. In the earlier book we examined the tanks that arrived in North Africa in March 1941 and those that fought the battles in the Western Desert until late 1942. This current volume covers the versions that were transported from November 1942 to the spring of 1943 when the final shipments were made and the last Axis units surrendered in Tunisia. To create a clear picture some repetition is required and I trust readers will forgive this.

Every tank that left the assembly plants was identified by a Fahrgestellnummer, or chassis number, usually abbreviated to Fgst.Nr., and these can sometimes be seen in contemporary photographs. As they are a certain means of identifying a model or version I have included them here as they related to a specific production batch.

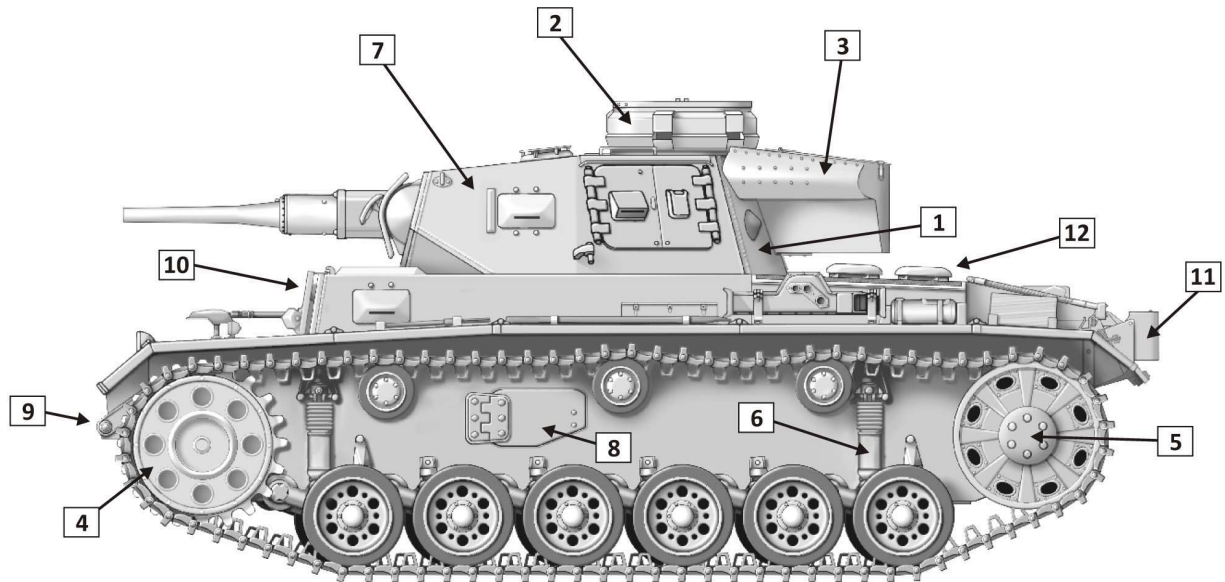
Different versions of a particular design were referred to as Ausführung, or model, followed by a letter of the alphabet and this is abbreviated here, and throughout this book, as Pzkw III ausf G or Pzkw III ausf H for example.

Guns were identified by the size of the bore in centimetres, the type and number in a series and the length (L) expressed in calibres, for example the main gun introduced in July 1940 was referred to as 5cm Kampfwagenkanone 38 L/42 (1). Kampfwagenkanone, or fighting vehicle gun, was abbreviated in manuals and official documents to KwK, as it is here. To avoid repetition of these rather lengthy titles I have used the full description only where I thought it necessary. For reasons of space I have not included some minor modifications such as the placement or

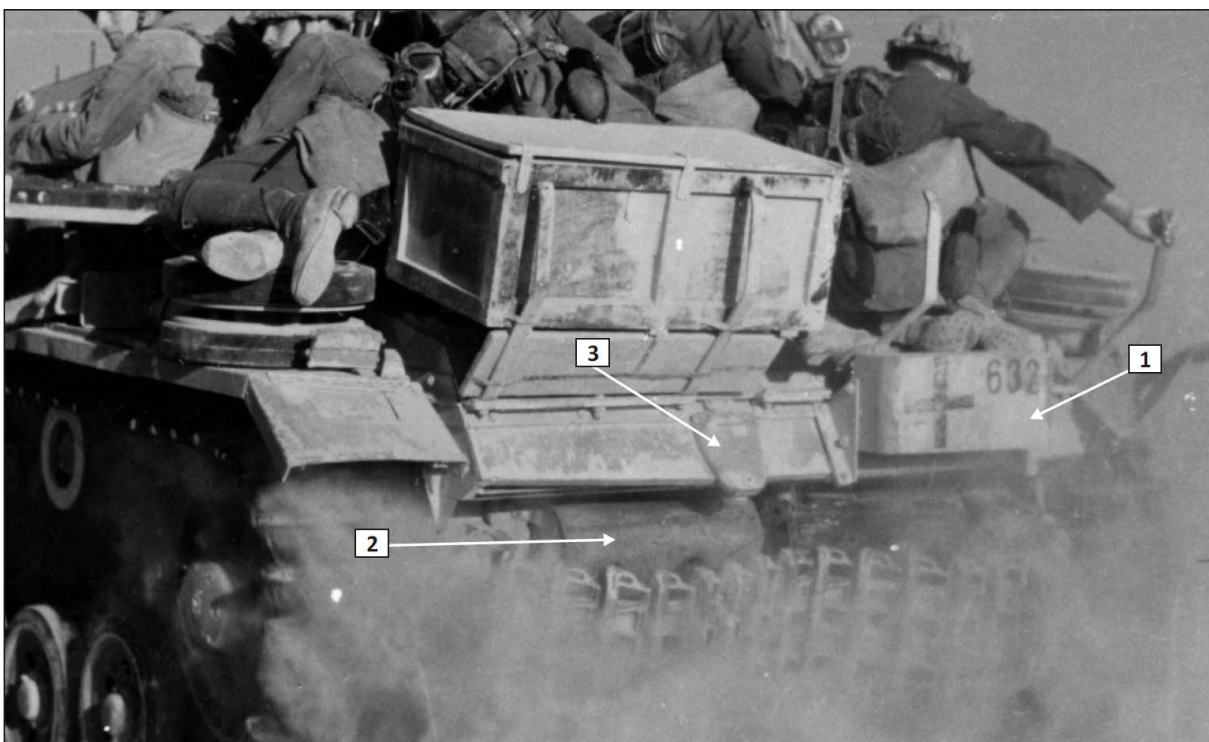
rearrangement of lifting hooks, tool clasps and hinges or the many minor internal changes and the following is intended to be a spotter's guide to enable the modeller and interested reader to differentiate between the versions of the Pzkw III that were in service in North Africa.

Pzkw III ausf H. Experience in the early war battles had shown that the armour protection of the Pzkw III would need to be enhanced and even as the campaign in France was drawing to a successful close, plans were initiated to fit the Pzkw III ausf G, which was still in production, with face-hardened plates of 30mm thickness, referred to as Zusatzpanzerung, which were bolted onto the hull glacis, the hull front and hull rear.

Development of the Pzkw III ausf H had actually begun in January 1939 and many of the production features of the previous models were altered or refined. The Zusatzpanzerung armour plates were retained but the turret was redesigned, in part to relieve the cramped conditions created by the introduction of the 5cm KwK 38 L/42 gun, and the turret rear face was constructed from a single armour plate without the cut-out for the cupola and this was an identifying feature of this model.



Pzkw III ausf H. Although externally similar to earlier models, this version can be identified by the redesigned turret which was now constructed with a single metal plate making up the rear wall (1). The new commander's cupola (2), which had been introduced during production of the Pzkw III ausf G, was now fitted neatly into the turret roof and the Gepäckkasten (3), or turret stowage box, no longer required a bracket to hold it in position. The tracks were widened and a cast drive sprocket, redesigned rear idler and wider road wheels were fitted to the hull. Due to difficulties with the supply of parts, a number of Pzkw III ausf H were assembled with the early-style drive sprocket (4), rear idler (5) and shock absorbers (6) as shown here. The deflector in front of the turret side vision port (7) was retained as was the escape hatch in the hull side (8) and the bolted-on towing couplings on the hull front (9). Other points to note are the Zusatzpanzerung bolted-on armour on the hull front (10) and the armoured cover for the smoke candle dischargers (11). At this stage only vehicles intended for service in North Africa were fitted with the Tropen armoured covers for the engine air intakes (12).



The rear of the Pzkw III ausf H was basically unchanged from the previous models except for the armoured cover of the Nebelkerzenabwurfvorrichtung, or smoke grenade rack (1), here marked with the Balkenkreuz national insignia and company number. The exhaust manifolds (2) are clearly visible and a deflector was added with the introduction of the Pzkw III ausf J. Note the early style engine crank cover (3). The large metal brackets and stowage boxes are field modifications and an identifying features of the tanks of Panzer-Regiment 8.

The commander's cupola was identical to the version fitted to the Pzkw IV and featured vertically-opening vision slots. A rudimentary direction indicator, or Richtungszeiger, was located directly in front of the foremost vision slot. In June 1940, during production of the Pzkw III ausf G, the ventilation fan had been moved to the centre of the turret roof.

A Gepäckkasten, or stowage box, was introduced and this was fitted to the turret rear. Although the official authorisation for the introduction of these boxes was issued on 23 April 1941, they had been under development for some time and photographs show that all the Pzkw III tanks that arrived in Tripoli in the previous March were equipped with Gepäckkasten (1).

The colloquial term Rommelkiste, simply Rommel box, is thought to have been inspired by the North African tanks. The stowage boxes were retro-

fitted to earlier models but because of the protruding cupola, metal brackets were required to hold them in place. The simplified shape of the Pzkwfw ausf H turret meant that the brackets were no longer required and the box was suspended from the two lifting hooks on the turret rear. A minor distinguishing feature of the Pzkwfw III ausf H were the wooden strips added to the sides of the stowage box that prevented the radio antenna from coming into contact with the metal sides. Internally, the turret was provided with a rotating basket on which the crew stood or sat and this feature was eventually retro-fitted to earlier models that were returned to Germany for repair. The Zusatzpanzerung and 5cm L/42 gun meant a considerable increase in weight over earlier models and this was compensated for by widening the suspension and the introduction of 400mm-wide Kgs 61/400/120 tracks. The cast drive sprocket, redesigned rear idler and simplified shock absorbers, as fitted to the later production examples of the Pzkwfw III ausf G, were supposed to be standard on this model but the earlier versions remained in use for some time, probably until stocks were exhausted, and are commonly seen in photographs. The road wheels were the 95mm-wide model. The complex and problematic Variorex pre-selective transmission, that had been trialled on earlier models, was replaced by a new Maybach version and the torsion bars were strengthened.

Tanks intended for shipment to North Africa were modified for Tropeneinsatz, or tropical service, and the most obvious form this took were the large holes cut in the ventilation hatches on the engine deck, to facilitate cooling, which were protected by armoured covers (2).

Internally, the cooling fan speed was increased and modifications were made to the spark plug openings and clutch housing and an extra oil filter was added. These changes were introduced as standard in December 1941 when the Pzkwfw III ausf L entered production (see below). It should be mentioned that as late as January 1942 many replacement vehicles arriving in North Africa lacked aspects of the Tropen modifications.

It was originally intended that this model would be the first of the Pzkwfw III tanks armed with the 5cm gun and a total of 759 were ordered. But as the Pzkwfw III ausf J, which incorporated all the improvements made to

previous models, neared the production stage, and the newer gun was progressively retro-fitted to earlier versions, the need for the Pzkw III ausf H diminished and it was really an interim variant with less than 300 examples accepted by the Heereswaffenamt (1), numbered in the Fgst.Nr. 660001 to 66650 series. Nevertheless, this was an important version in terms of development and incorporated over sixty major and minor improvements over earlier models ranging from the significantly simplified turret design to upgraded sighting equipment.

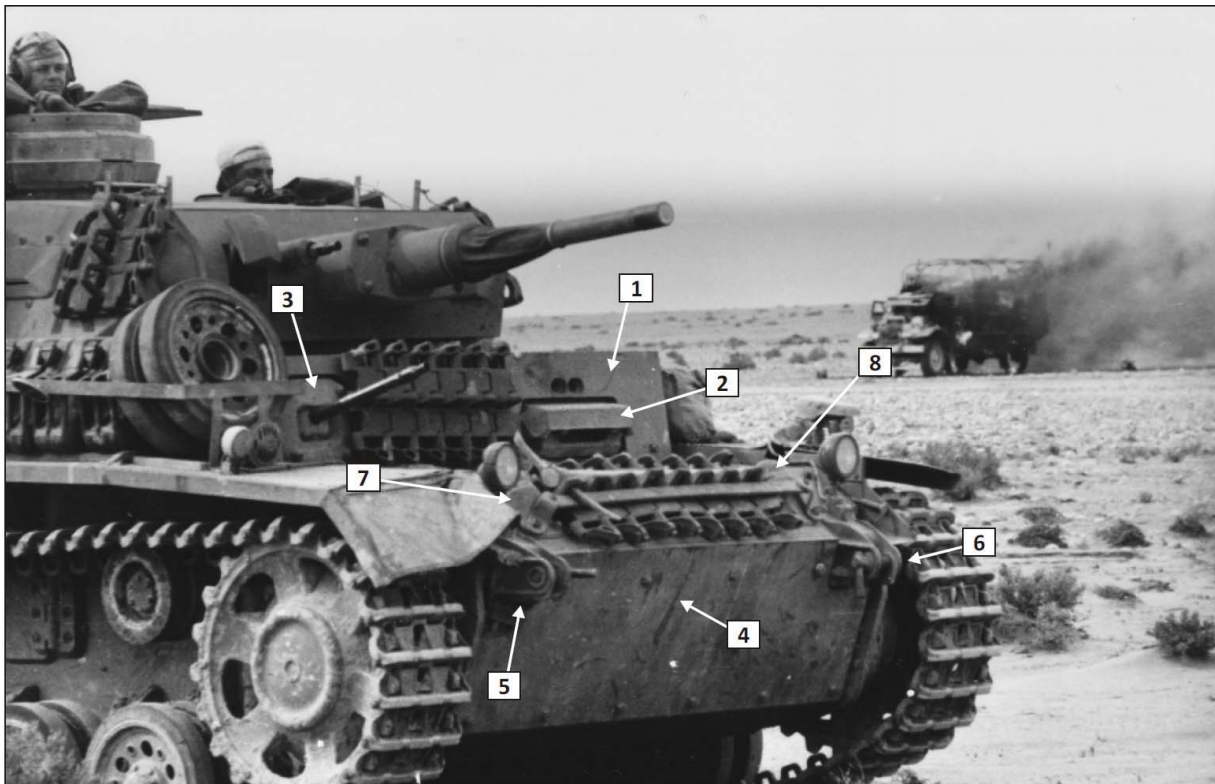
The Pzkw III ausf H was also used as the basis for the Panzerbefehlswagen command tank and examples of this vehicle, and a version built using the Pzkw III ausf E, were shipped to North Africa. The former can be identified by the flat turret rear, clearly visible as the stowage box was not a feature of these tanks, and the Zusatzpanzerung armour fitted to the hull front where the machine gun aperture was closed by a conicalshaped pistol port. Both versions were fitted with the distinctive, and very conspicuous, radio antenna which took the form of a raised metal rail enclosing the engine deck. As the first examples of the Pzkw III ausf H were being assembled, a programme referred to as Umbewaffnung, literally rearmament, was instituted with the aim of upgrading the approximately 1,200 Pzkw III tanks already in service to something approaching the standard of the Pzkw III ausf H and the Pzkw III ausf J which was then in the development stage (2).

The most important modifications included the installation of the 5cm L/42 gun and external mantlet, the fitting of Zusatzpanzerung additional armour, the widening of the suspension and the replacement of the shock absorbers and torsion bars with the newer versions. The early pattern drive sprocket and rear idler were retained on many vehicles but were modified to accommodate the wider tracks.

It was anticipated that about half the tanks in question would need all the modifications listed while the remainder would only require an upgrade to their suspension and it was expected that the necessary changes would be completed by March 1941. In addition to the modifications mentioned here,

many tanks were fitted with Gepäckkasten and the armoured covers of the so-called Tropen air intakes.

All the Pzkw III tanks sent to North Africa with Panzer-Regiment 5 and Panzer Regiment 8 in early 1941 were supposed to have been fitted with the desired modifications and although this was achieved with the installation of the 5cm gun and the Tropen ventilation covers, it is common to see a mixture of early and late drive sprockets, rear idlers and shock absorbers.



A Pzkw III ausf H with Zusatzpanzerung armour (1) fitted over the driver's visor (2) and Kugelblende 30 machine-gun mount (3) and bolted onto the hull front (4). Note the large towing couplings (5 and 6) that were dropped from production with the Pzkw III ausf J. Just visible are the early brake vent covers (7 and 8). What is possibly a letter R underneath the tracks on the turret side would suggest that this tank was attached to the regimental headquarters of Panzer-Regiment 8.

Pzkw III ausf J. This version was the final production model of the Pzkw III tank, subsequent developments being variations, and is easily identifiable by the 50mm hull front plate with a redesigned driver's visor and distinctive Kugelblende machine-gun mount.

Tanks destined for service in North Africa were fitted with the Tropen modifications including the armoured covers on the ventilation hatches on the engine deck and from December 1941 this was a standard production feature of all Pzkw III tanks as were the single-piece inspection hatches on the hull front.

The rear hull was made up of two flat armour plates above an exhaust deflector and the smoke candle dischargers were dropped from production. A major design modification saw the hull side plates extended at the front, providing integral towing eyes which obviated the need for the bolt-on versions of earlier models.

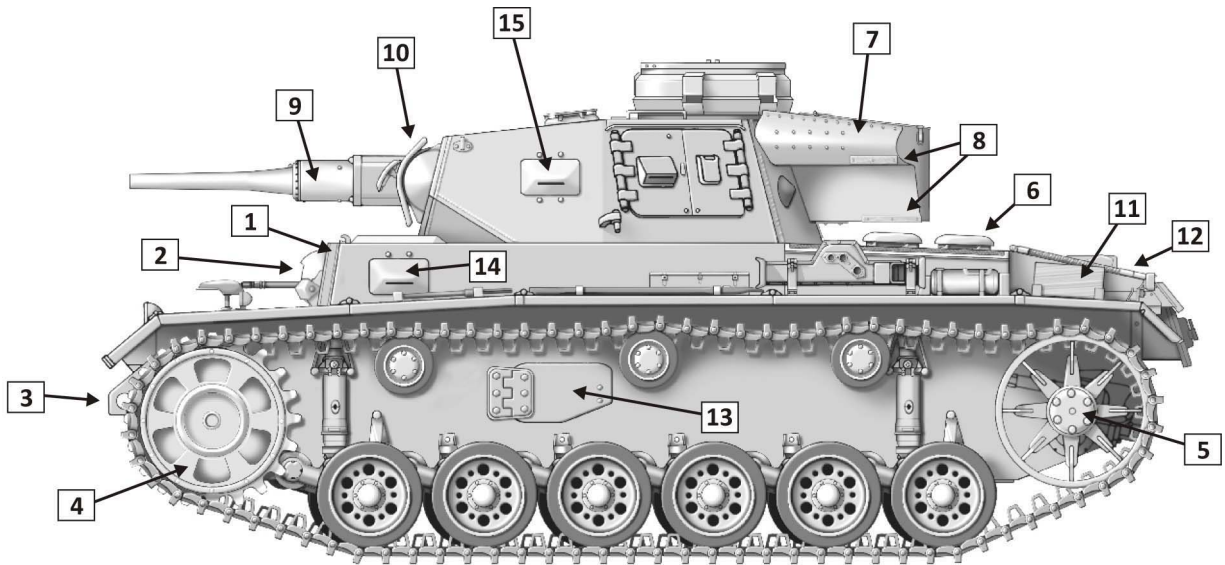
Although the wider suspension was standard on this model a number of photographs exist which show Pzkw III tanks fitted with the earlier style drive sprocket and rear idlers and it would seem that, suitably modified, these were fitted until supplies were exhausted.

The first Pzkw III ausf J tanks that left the assembly lines in March 1941 were armed with the 5cm L/42 main gun which had been introduced to replace the 3.7cm KwK 36 L/45 weapon during the early production run of the Pzkw III ausf G. This was done without the knowledge or consent of Hitler who had directed as early as June 1940 that the long-barrelled 5cm KwK 39 L/60 gun be adapted for Pzkw III production (1). Without reference to the Führer, and acting on the advice of Dr Ferdinand Porsche, who stated that turret of the Pzkw III could not accommodate the larger gun, the Heereswaffenamt opted for the 5cm L/42. When Hitler learnt that his directive had been ignored he was furious and, at a meeting in late 1940 or early 1941, demanded that the L/60 gun be incorporated into production. Once again, the technical experts, including Porsche, claimed that this could not be done.

A director from the Berlin firm of Alkett, Paul Panten, who was present at the meeting undertook to build an experimental model fitted with the 5cm L/60 weapon although he was privately sceptical (2). Panten's prototype was ready by March 1941 and was trialled in front of Hitler where it performed exceptionally and it was immediately ordered that all future

Pzkw III tanks be fitted with the 5cm L/60 gun. But due to difficulties with supply it was not until December 1941 that the new gun became a standard feature.

A total of 779 Pzkw III ausf J models equipped with the 5cm L/42 gun were assembled, identified by Fgst.Nr. 68001 to 69000, while about 823 vehicles armed with the 5cm L/60 weapon were built and received Fgst.Nr. 72001 to 74100. In early April 1942 all Pzkw III ausf J that had been built with the 5cm L/60 gun were renamed as Pzkw III ausf L, there being no difference between the two versions, and often the only clue to identifying a renamed Pzkw III ausf J is the date of the photograph or the Fahrgestellnummer in the rare instances where this is visible.

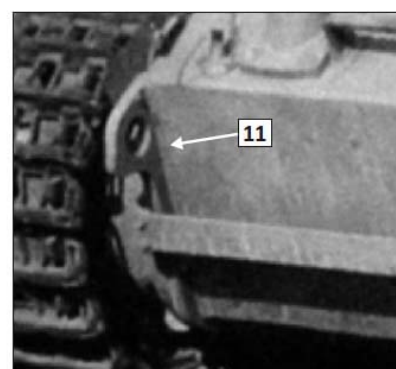
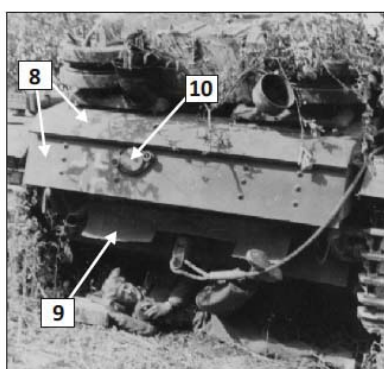
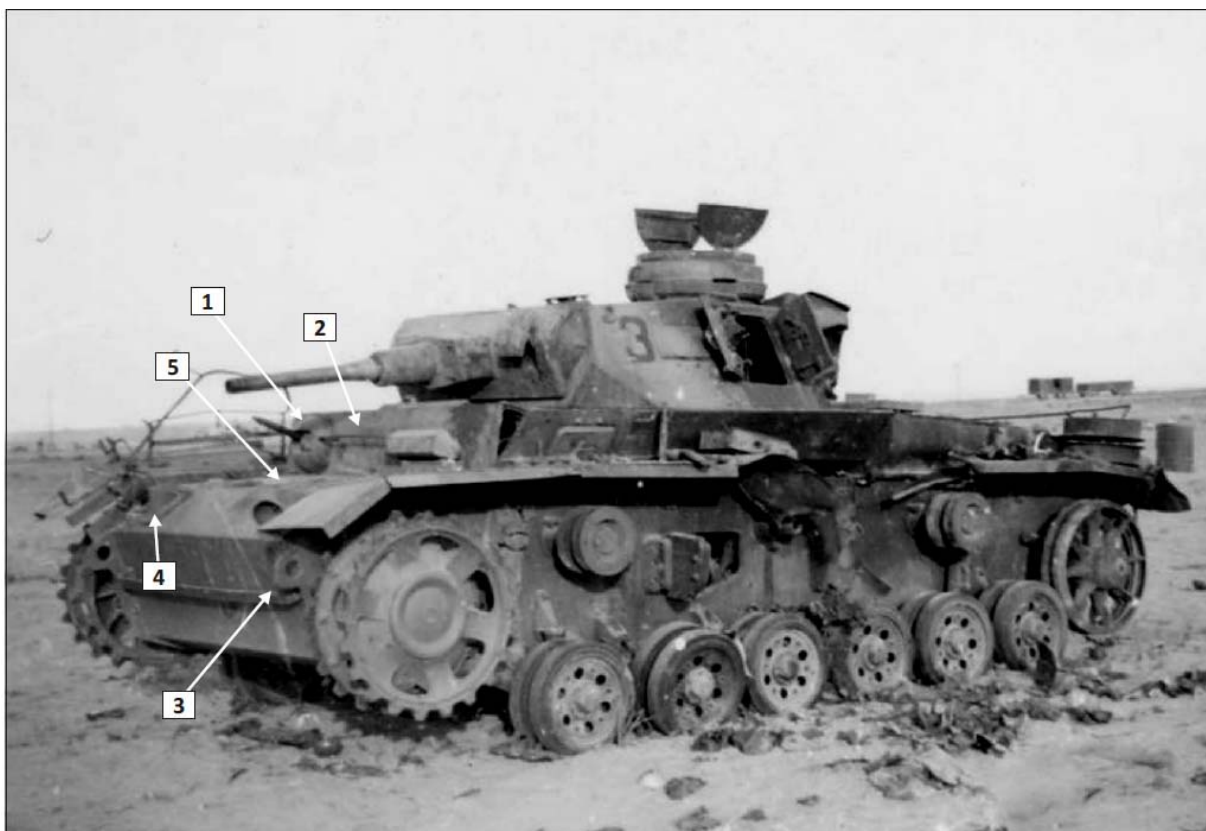


A Pzkw III ausf J Tropen. This version can be identified by the 50mm-thick front plate (1) which housed the distinctive Kugelblende machine gun mount (2). The hull sides were extended at the front and holes were cut to form towing eyes (3) which replaced the bolted-on couplings of earlier models. A redesigned drive sprocket (4) and rear idler (5) were fitted which could accommodate the wider tracks without adjustment. The Tropen air intake covers (6) were now standard as was the simplified turret which had been introduced with the Pzkw III ausf H. The design of the latter meant that brackets were no longer required to hold the Gepäckkasten (7), or turret stowage box, in place. Note the wooden strips on the sides (8) which were meant to prevent contact between the radio antenna and the metal box. This vehicle is armed with the 5cm KwK 38 L/42 main gun (9) and the improved mantlet (10) and a total of 779 examples of the Pzkw III ausf J were assembled before the 5cm L/60 weapon was introduced. The wooden jack block (11) and towing cable (12) were stowed on the engine deck as they had been in earlier models. A track toolbox, not visible here, was attached to the right side front mudguard. The hull escape hatch (13) was retained as were the side vision ports (15 and 16) although the deflector on the turret side was deleted during production of this version and is missing here. The smoke grenade discharger was removed from its position on the rear engine deck.

As early as July 1941 discussions about incorporating Vorpanzer spaced armour into Pzkw III production culminated in Hitler's decision that all Pzkw III be fitted with additional 20mm thick armour plates. A shortage of support frames meant that a small number of the Pzkw III ausf J production run were fitted with Vorpanzer armour on the hull front, probably from September 1941, but it was not until March 1942 that the plates were also fitted to the gun mantlet.

Three examples of a special variant, the Pzkw III (Funk), were based on the Pzkw III ausf J model and sent to North Africa in September 1942 as part of Versuchskommando (FI) Tropen (1). It was intended that these tanks would control a number of remotely-controlled demolition vehicles.

All were equipped with the 5cm L/42 gun and revised gun mantlet and fitted with the Tropen modifications including the armoured covers for the engine ventilation hatches. But in place of the Gepäckkasten an armoured bin was fitted to the turret rear which housed the specialised radio equipment. The latter version of this bin, with which all three were equipped, could be identified by the prominent antenna on the left side. Examples of these tanks are shown on [page 17](#) of the Camouflage & Markings section and the company is discussed in the unit histories.



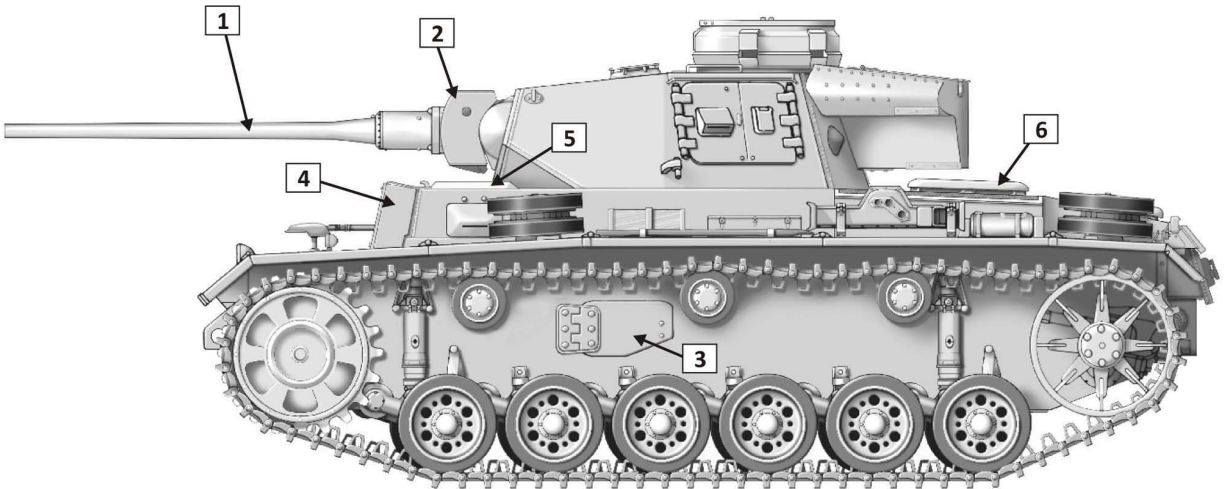
Although badly damaged, this Pzkw III ausf J of 3. Kompanie, Panzer-Regiment 8 provides a good view of a number of identifying production features of this model, most notably the later Kugelblende 50 machine-gun mount (1), 50mm armour plate (2), the extended hull sides that formed rudimentary towing eyes (3) and the improved brake vent covers (4). Almost visible are the single piece hatches on the hull glacis (5). Below, left to right: The commander's cupola (6) first introduced during the Pzkw III ausf G production run. Note the rarely-seen Fliegerbeschussgerät 41 anti-aircraft machine-gun mount (7) bolted to the front edge. The configuration of the hull rear introduced with the Pzkw III ausf J was made up of two armour plates (8) and an exhaust deflector (9). This model was also fitted with a redesigned engine crank cover (10). A closer view of the hull side extension and towing eye (11).

Pzkw III ausf L. As mentioned above, some time between 28 March and 3 April 1942 a new designation, Pzkw III ausf L, was introduced to describe all vehicles fitted with the long-barrelled 5cm L/60 gun. Pzkw III ausf J tanks assembled prior to April and armed with the L/60 gun were renamed although the vehicle serial number plates were still marked as Pzkw III ausf J (1).

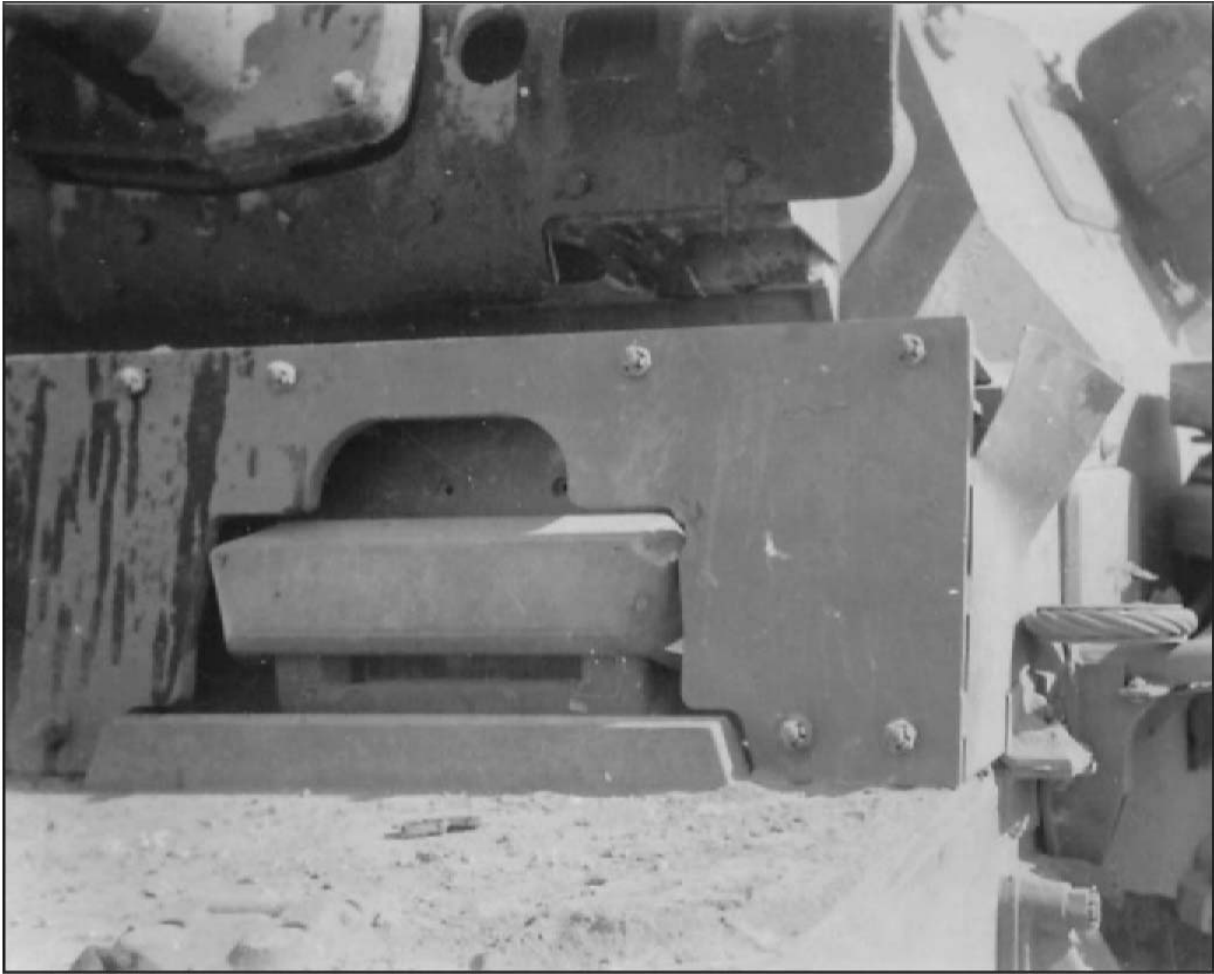
The new model was identical to the Pzkw III ausf J and although Vorpanzer armour was supposed to be standard, most vehicles assembled between April and August 1942 were fitted with full Vorpanzer armour on the hull front with just the frame on the gun mantlet. From June 1942, to allowing access to the Kugelblende machine-gun mount, the side plate of the hull Vorpanzer armour was no longer fitted. At the same time the bullet deflector bolted to the superstructure roof in front of the turret was gradually dropped from production as were the hull escape hatches and these modification were completed by October 1942.

In January 1942 the vision ports on the turret sides and the right side vision port on the gun mantlet were dropped from production. But as a large number of turrets had already had the holes cut to accommodate the vision ports, and a substantial quantity of the actual ports had been fabricated, they were welded into place and it was some time before turrets without the vision ports left the assembly lines. From September 1942 smoke grenade dischargers were fitted on each side of the turret.

In mid-1942 the original order for 1,100 Pzkw III ausf L tanks was cancelled after just 653 vehicles were assembled, using the range Fgst.Nr. 74101 to 75500, and production switched to the 7.5cm armed Pzkw III ausf N.



Pzkw III ausf L. Only minor production changes differentiated this model from the late production Pzkw III ausf J as mentioned in the text. The vehicle shown here is fitted with the 5cm L/60 gun (1) which was by now a standard fitting. Although these tanks were supposed to be equipped with a full set of Vorpanzer armour, delays in production meant that the front plate for the gun mantlet was often missing, as it is here, although the frame is in place (2). The turret vision port was dropped from production but hulls with the escape hatch (3) were used in the assembly process until October 1942. During production of the Pzkw III ausf L the side plate of the hull Vorpanzer armour (4) was deleted although it could be seen on many vehicles. From June 1942 the bullet deflector (5) bolted to the superstructure roof in front of the turret was gradually dropped from production. Note that the armoured cover of the engine air intake hatch (6) is now fitted parallel to the hull.



A complete set of Vorpanzer armourfitted to a Pzkw III tank. Note the relative thinness of the side plate which has been damaged here.



The frame for the plate which covered the gun mantlet was not made of face-hardened steel and was easily damaged, as can be seen here. The 20mm hull front plate is still in place but has been knocked back and the brackets which held it in place have been pushed upwards.



A Pzkw III ausf J, renamed as ausf L, photographed in late 1942 or early 1943. The frame for Vorpanzer armour on the gun mantlet offered no protection and was merely meant to hold the armour plate in place. The side panel of the hull Vorpanzer armour was dropped from production, as mentioned in the text, to allow access to the Kugelblende machine-gun mount. The Fahrgestelle Nummer, 72301, just visible on the driver's visor, identifies this as a Daimler-Benz built tank.



Pzkw III ausf L tanks of Panzer-Regiment 7 photographed in Tunisia. Both have full sets of Vorpanzer armour and smoke grenade dischargers, or Nebelkerzen-Wurfgerät, mounted on the turret sides indicating that these vehicles were assembled after September 1942.

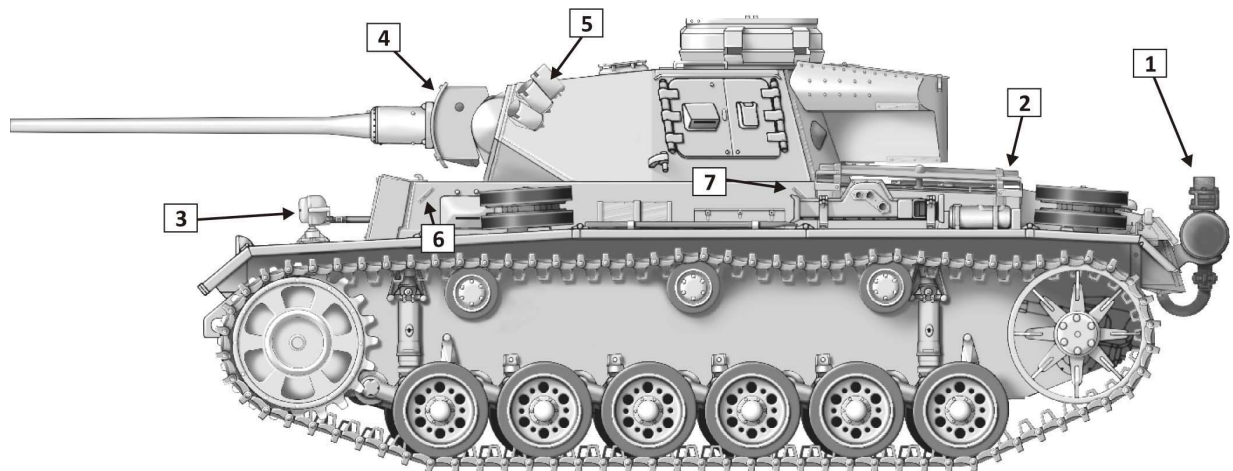
Pzkw III ausf M. This model was the final production version of the Pzkw III tank and was really a modification of the Pzkw III ausf L. It is easily differentiated from the earlier variants by the prominent deep wading exhaust, the adjustable watertight fittings on the hull air intakes and the Bosch headlights, which were also watertight, on the front edge of the mudguards.

Vorpanzer armour was a standard fitting on this model as was the Tropen ventilation hatch covers although the configuration of these was altered as production continued and additional lifting hooks were welded to the hull sides. The original order for this model called for 1,000 vehicles but it was reduced with the introduction of the Pzkw V Panther tank in early 1943 while approximately 100 were converted to flamethrowing versions, as the

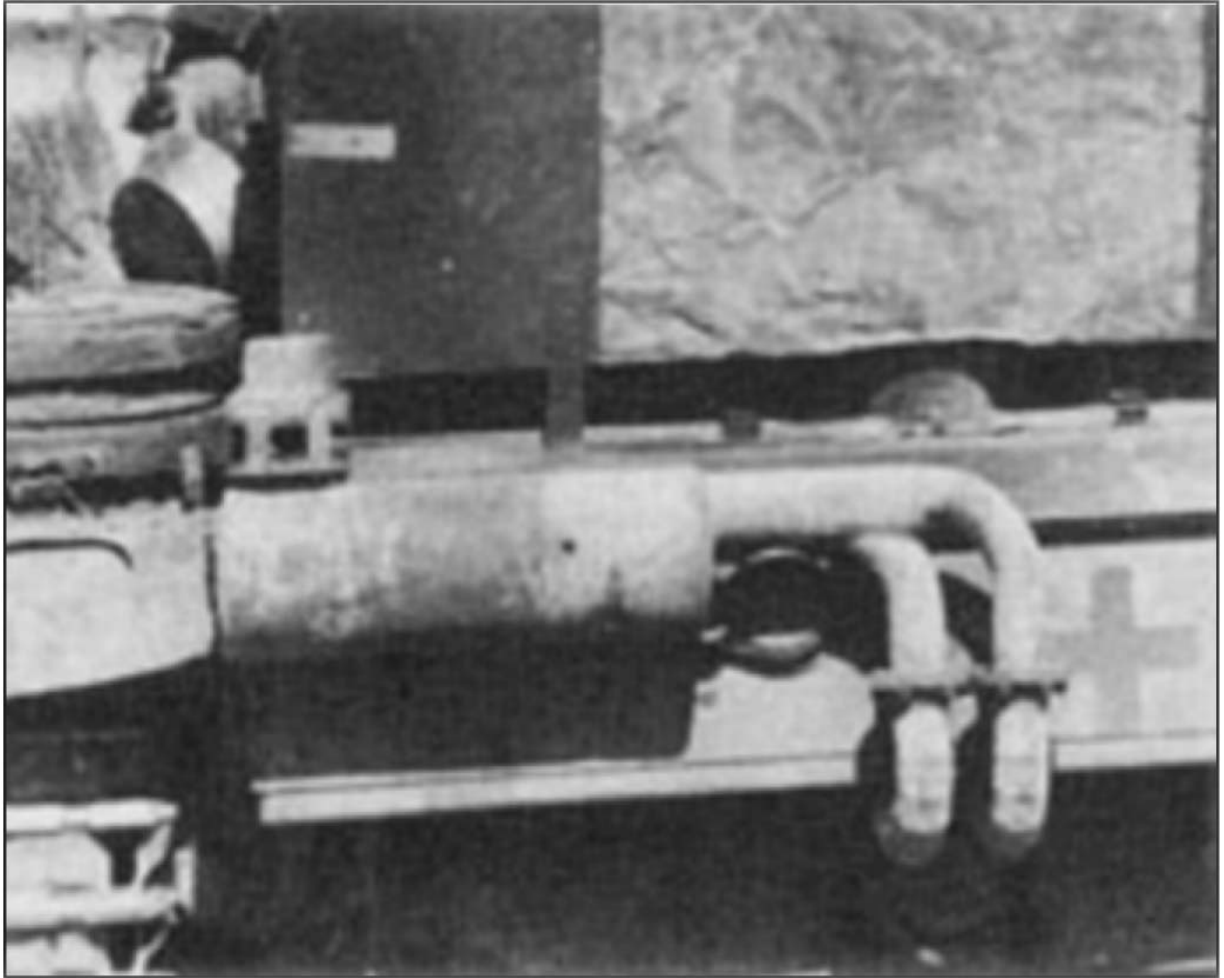
Pzkw III (Flamm), and a further 165 hulls were set aside for the Sturmgeschütz III programme. Hitler was so impressed with reports of the effectiveness of the Pzkw III ausf N (see below) that on 7 November 1942 a decision was made to complete the remainder of the Pzkw III ausf M production run with the 7.5cm L/24 gun and approximately 167 vehicles were eventually fitted with the heavier weapon.

This order necessitated that manufacture of the 7.5cm L/24 be restarted and as the first tank armed with the new gun did not leave the assembly line at Mag before February 1943, it is doubtful that any reached North Africa (1).

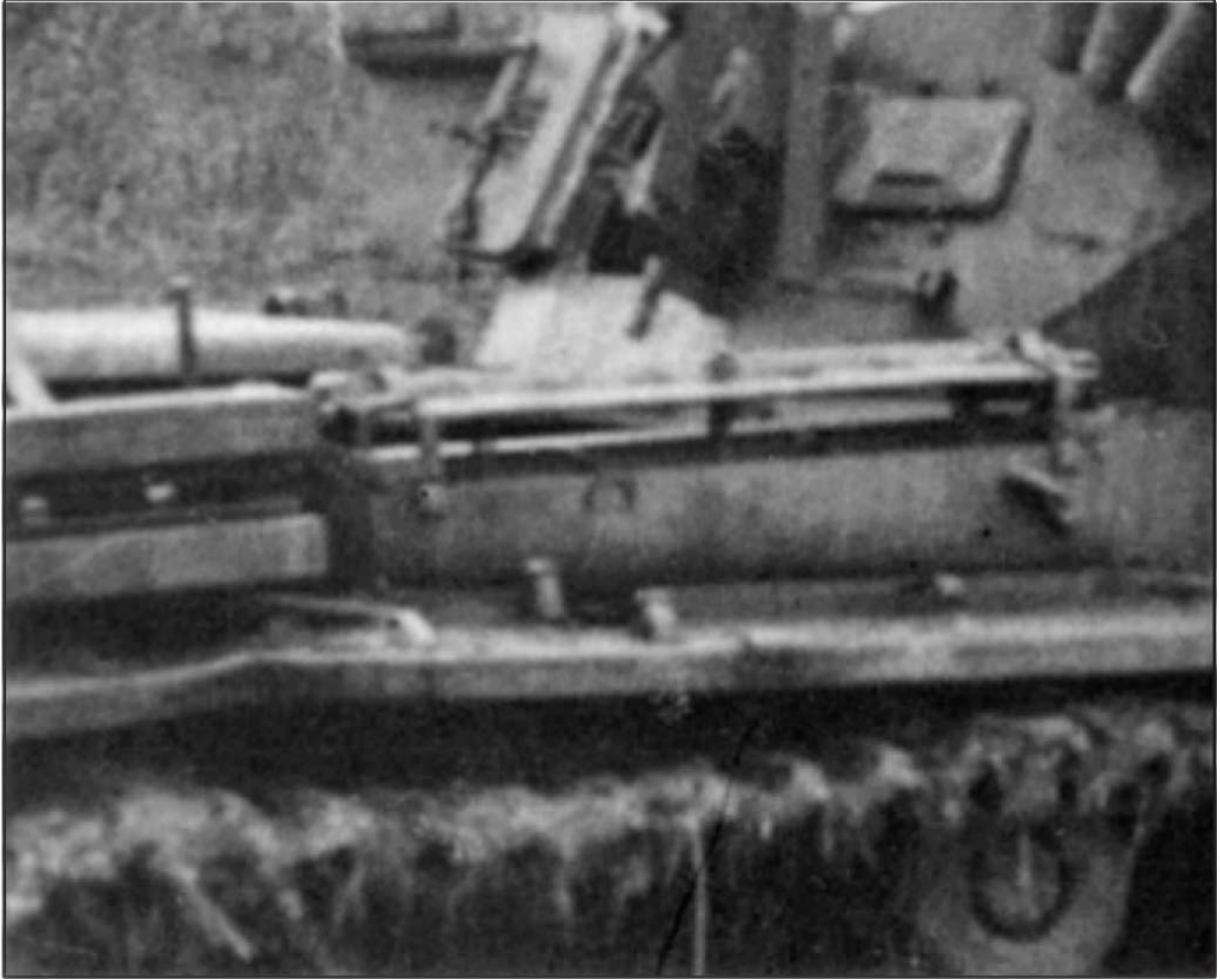
When production ended in February 1943 just 250 examples of the Pzkw III ausf M had been accepted by the Heereswaffenamt, number in the Fgst.Nr. 74501 to 77608 range (2), and only a small number served with the units of Heeresgruppe Afrika.



A Pzkw III ausf M. Identifying features of this version were the distinctive engine muffler (1), the adjustable airtight covers for the hull side air intakes (2) and the Bosch headlight (3) which was also watertight. The engine muffler featured a stop valve and was based on the technology developed for the Tauchpanzer submersible tank programme and various rubber hoods could be fitted to the brake vents, radio antenna insulator and gun mantlet. The Pzkw III ausf M vehicle depicted here is fitted with a full set of Vorpanzer armour, including the front plate for the gun mantlet (4), and Nebelkerzen-Wurfgerät smoke grenade dischargers (5). The latter were a standard fitting from September 1942 until May 1943. The lifting hooks on either side of the hull (6 and 7) were also an identifying feature of this model. Note the absence of the turret vision ports and the hull escape hatch, both of which had completely disappeared from production by now.



The Auspuff exhaust system of the Pzkw III ausf M. The cylinder on the top left edge of the muffler contained the snorkel device that was automatically activated at a certain depth.



The adjustable cover of the hull air intake. This had to be lowered manually but could be raised from inside the turret.

Pzkw III ausf N. This version was built on the existing chassis of Pzkw ausf L vehicles with almost no change other than those necessary to replace the original main armament with a modified 7.5cm L/24 gun.

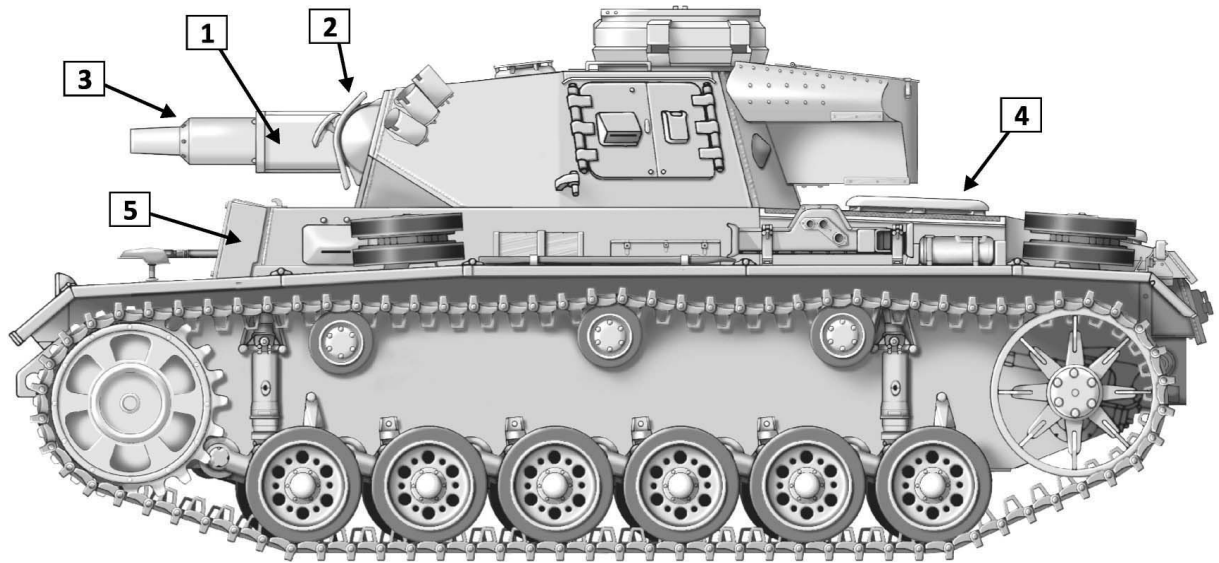
This howitzer-like weapon had been fitted to the first examples of the Pzkw IV tank and the Sturmgeschütz III assault gun and its replacement with more powerful weapons meant that 450 surplus examples were available.

The turret was redesigned and the most obvious change was the enlarged housing for the gun's recoil and recuperator cylinders. Internal modifications included a reworked gun carriage, a counterweight and travel lock for the gun and a bracket for the gun sight bolted to the turret roof.

Vorpanzer armour was fitted to the hull front but not the turret mantlet. A total of 447 Pzkw III ausf N tanks from what was termed the Einmalige Serie (1) were accepted by the Heereswaffenamt between July and October 1942 with the Fahrgestelle numbers ranging from 73857 to 76400, although there were large gaps due to the assembly being undertaken by at least six different firms.

In November 1942, at Hitler's insistence, the 5cm L/60 gun was to be immediately replaced in production by the 7.5cm weapon and as many as 167 Pzkw III ausf M vehicles were completed in this configuration. As the first of these tanks was completed in February 1943 it is highly unlikely that any served in North Africa and I have been unable to find a single photograph to confirm their use.

Also in November 1942, a second Umbewaffnung programme was instituted which saw the 7.5cm L/24 gun fitted to all Pzkw III tanks returned to Germany for repair but as the first of these vehicles was converted in June 1943, after the Axis surrender in Tunisia, they need not concern us here and it is mentioned as a matter of interest only.



Pzkw III ausf N. Points to note are the enlarged housing for the recoil cylinder and recuperator (1) and revised gun mantlet (2). The collar fitted to the 7.5cm gun (3) is the bolted-on version and a simplified variant; without bolts, is also commonly seen. The latter was introduced during the production run of the Pzkw IV ausf E and it is reasonable to classify it as a later production version. Although photographic evidence would seem to suggest that the bolted-on model was a characteristic of Pzkw III ausf N tanks fitted with the smoke grenade dischargers, at least in North Africa; the collars were interchangeable (see below) and they are more an indicator of the guns vintage than that of the tank the gun was installed in. Note the engine ventilation hatch cover (4) which is now fitted parallel to the hull. The side panel of the hull Vorpanzer armour (5) is evident on some tanks but missing on others and tanks based on early production Pzkw III ausf L hulls retained the escape hatch, although this seems to be rare. The smoke grenade dischargers were fitted to most vehicles, but not all.





The barrel of the 7.5cm KwK 37 L/24 gun as fitted to the Pzkwfw III ausf N. As mentioned in the text above, two types of collar were fitted to barrel's protective jacket during production.



A Pzkw III ausf N of I. Kompanie, schwere panzer-Abteilung 501 photographed at some time before February 1943. The hull and suspension are typical of the Pzkw III ausf L, on which these tanks were based, but has been fitted with gun cleaning rods and the brackets to hold them on the hull side in front of the antenna trough. This modification was probably first incorporated into the assembly process in August 1942 and some tanks in North Africa are seen without it. The turret is fitted with smoke grenade dischargers which were introduced in the following September. The wooden box on the forward section of the mudguard was afield modification common to the light tanks of this battalion.



On 26 February the tanks of schwere Panzer-Abteilung 501 were used to create a III. Abteilung for Panzer-Regiment 7. This 2. Kompanie PzKpfw III ausf N was renumbered as 832, and possibly repainted as explained in the Camouflage & Markings section. In terms of technical details this vehicle is almost identical to the tank depicted above but also has a bracket welded to the turret roof to hold fuel containers and this can be seen in photographs of other 2. Kompanie tanks.

1. The calibre of German guns was arrived at by dividing the length by the bore size. Confusingly, this was usually the length of the barrel but sometimes the breech was included.
1. It is almost certain that the stowage boxes were fitted in January 1941, the same time that the tanks were modified for tropical service.
2. Tropen, or tropical, was deemed to be any area where the temperatures regularly exceeded 28 degrees Celsius, approximately 82 degrees Fahrenheit.
1. The Heereswaffenamt, or army ordnance office, was responsible for the design, testing, development, and acceptance of all weaponry including armoured vehicles.
2. Although exact dates are difficult to determine, it would seem that the first PzKpfw III ausf H was completed by Daimler Benz in October 1940 while the Umbewaffnung programme began in the previous month.

1. The 5cm KwK 39 L/60 gun was based on the army's Pak 38 towed anti-tank weapon. It was comparable to the Soviet 57mm anti-tank gun and, with certain types of ammunition, could penetrate 50mm of armour plate at a range of 1,000 metres.

2. Panten has been described variously in different accounts as the manager or director of Altmärkische Kettenwerke, or Alkett. His full title in 1941 was Direktor und Betriebsführer der Alkett, Wehrwirtschaftsführer.

1. Fgst.Nr. 68125 was built by Daimler-Benz while Fgst.Nr. 73700 and 73701 were assembled by Henschel.

1. The Fgst numbers give here and in the remainder of this section are the ranges allocated and do not correspond to actual production. The range was usually more than required for security reasons.

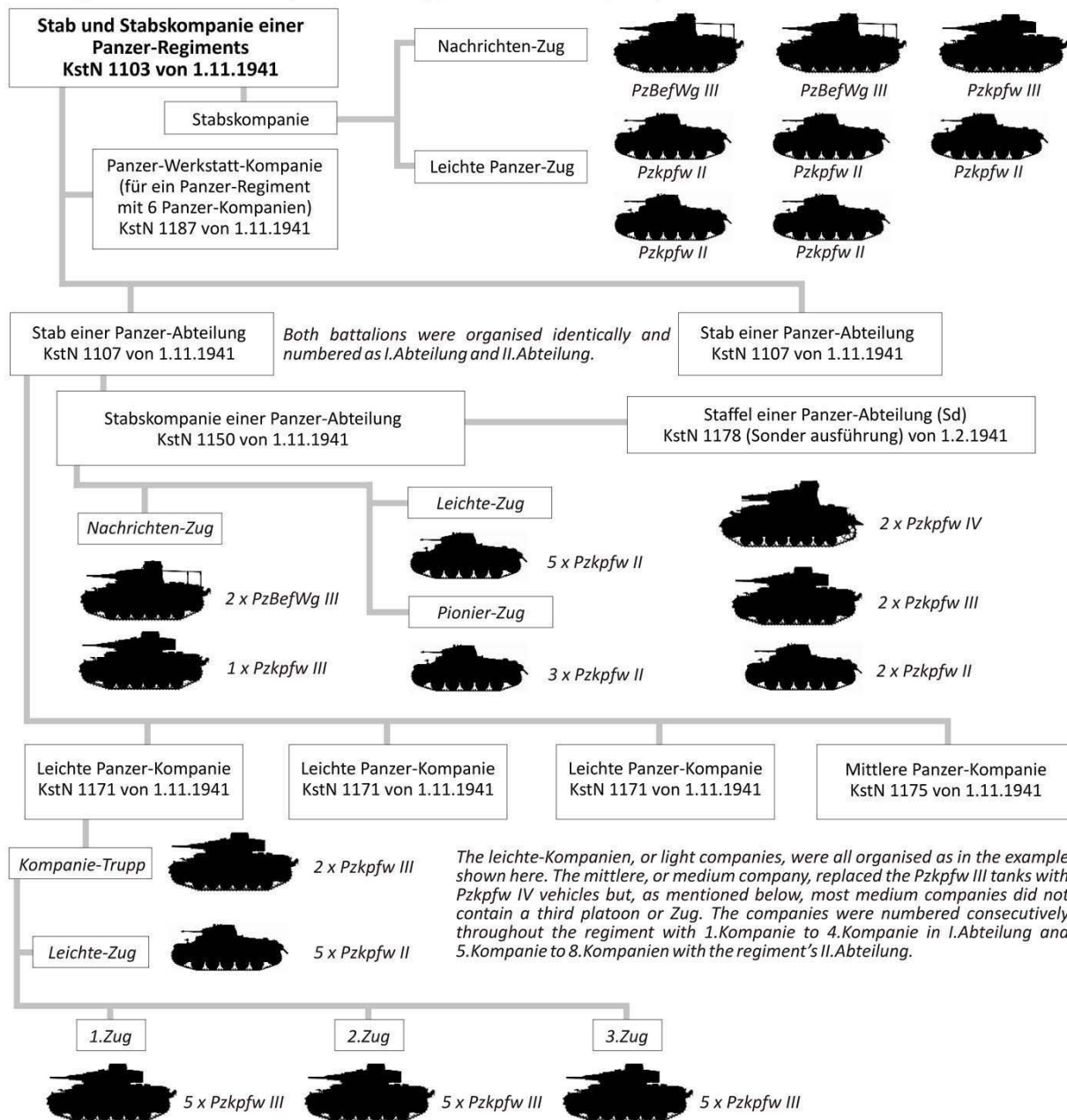
1. The new gun was slightly revised and referred to as 7.5cm KwK 51 L/24.

2. The Fgst numbers given here, and throughout this section, are the ranges allocated and do not correspond to actual production. The range was usually more than required for security reasons.

1. Literally, unique or solitary with the implication that it is not to be repeated.

PANZER-REGIMENT, NOVEMBER 1941

All formations of the German Army were organised according to detailed tables of establishment referred to as Kriegsständenachweisung (KstN) which showed the official composition of a unit, listing the exact number of personnel and type of equipment from vehicles to small arms. The tables were numbered and dated, the latter being all-important as some numbers were duplicated. The KstN were accompanied by Kriegsausrüstungsnachweisung (KAN) which listed minor items in detail such as tools and fuel containers but these need not concern us here. It should be mentioned that regiments and battalions did not automatically undertake a reorganisation process when new KstN came into force, rather, specific orders were promulgated for each unit. On 1 November 1941 a new set of KstN and KAN were issued to reorganise the Panzer regiments, replacing the establishments authorised in the previous February. The most obvious changes were that the Nachrichten-Zug and leichte Panzer-Zug were now incorporated into the regiment's Stabskompanie, although the number of allocated vehicles was not altered, and three Pzkw II tanks were authorised for the Pionier-Zug of the Panzer-Abteilung headquarters.

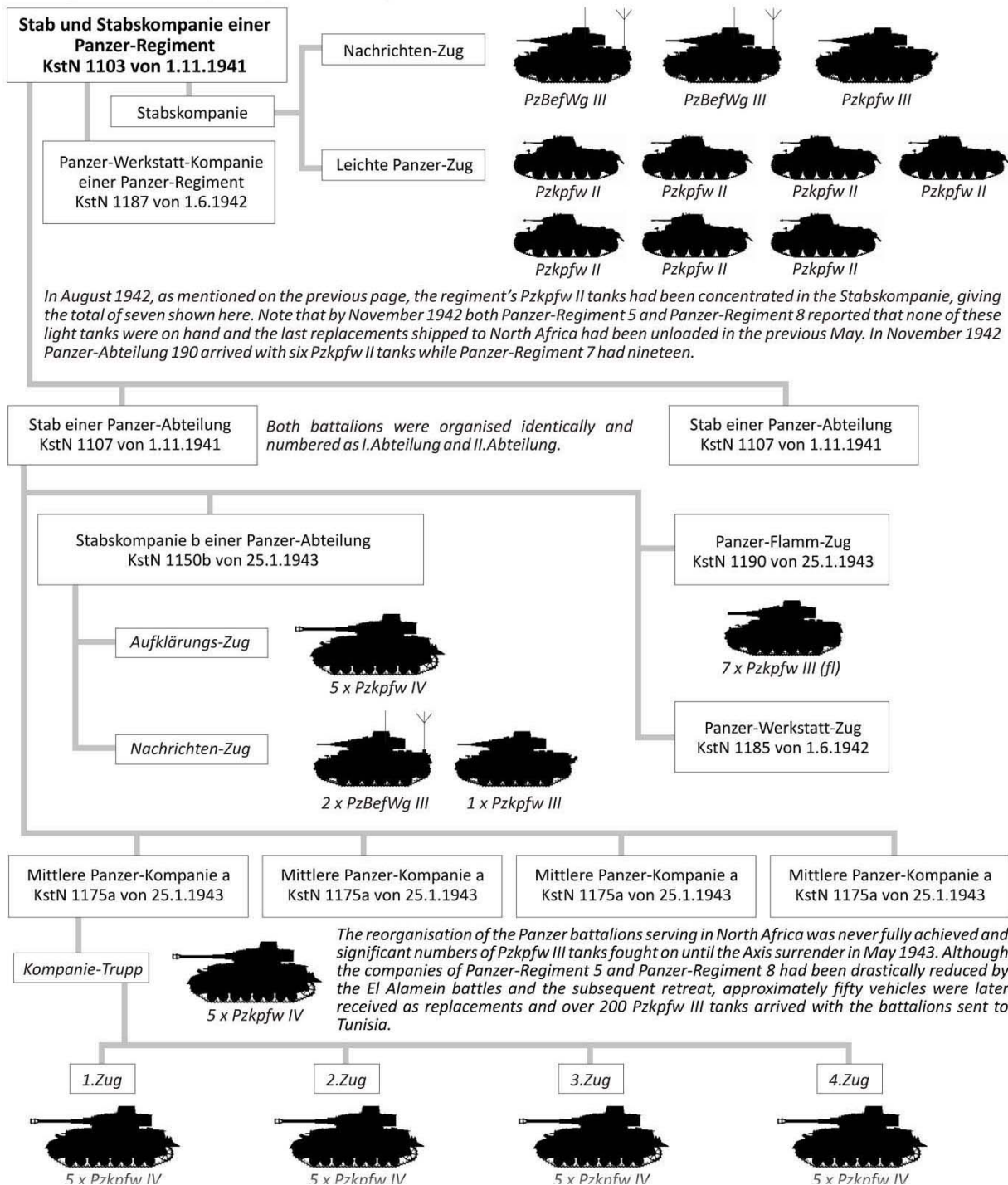


The February 1941 KstN had authorised a total of fourteen PzKpfw IV tanks for the regiment's medium companies and although this was reiterated in the November directive very few battalions were ordered to create a third platoon or allocated the necessary vehicles. From December 1941 PzKpfw III tanks with the long-barrelled 5cm L/60 gun were allocated to Panzer companies as they became available but there was no differentiation in the relevant KstN between these vehicles and PzKpfw III armed with the 5cm L/42 weapon. In North Africa an extra PzKpfw II platoon was authorised for the regimental and battalion headquarters of Panzer-Regiment 5 but as there were a limited number of these tanks available the regiments of 15. Panzer-Division and 21. Panzer-Division distributed theirs to the light and Pionier platoons of the headquarters companies and the headquarters sections

of the Pzkw IV companies. These two divisions were the only formations authorised to contain a reserve tank detachment, usually made up of a few Pzkw III tanks. In August 1942 units were notified that Pzkw III ausf N tanks equipped with the 7.5cm L/24 gun would henceforth be issued in place of all previous versions and it was envisaged that each leichte Panzer-Kompanie would contain one platoon of the new type. In the same month the number of Pzkw II tanks with the regimental and battalion headquarters was increased to seven but all these light tanks were removed from the Pionier-Zug and each company headquarters. The official February 1941 organisation, with the relevant KstN, and the actual configurations of Panzer-Regiment 5 and Panzer-Regiment 8 at that time, are examined in TankCraft 36: Panzer III German Army Light Tank, North Africa Tripoli to El Alamein 1941–1942.

PANZER-REGIMENT, JANUARY 1943

By the end of 1942 the Pzkw III tank was reaching the end of its operational usefulness and in January 1943 orders were issued that new, rebuilt or existing Panzer battalions were to be organised in accordance with KstN that reflected the availability of the Pzkw IV which had been fitted with the powerful 7.5cm L/43 gun since March 1942. The regimental headquarters was largely unchanged although the KstN for the Panzer-Werkstatt-Kompanie had been amended in June 1942. By this time the early Panzerbefehlswagen command tanks with their distinctive rail aerials were being replaced by a version based on the Pzkw III ausf J with a fully rotatable turret and simplified antenna display, as shown here. A total of eighty-one of these tanks were built by April 1942 and some may have served with the units sent to Tunisia but I have been unable to confirm this. No examples of the purpose-built Pzkw III ausf K command tank were shipped to North Africa. The Panzer battalion's Abteilungsstab was also unchanged but the Stabs-Kompanie now contained an Aufklärungs-Zug, or reconnaissance platoon, and a platoon of Pzkw III (fl) flamethrowing tanks although none of the latter found their way to North Africa. In addition, the battalions were authorised a Werkstatt platoon. The Panzer companies were now to be made up of a Kompanie-Trupp and four tank platoons, all equipped with Pzkw IV tanks, and each of the regiment's two battalions was to contain four of these companies. This was of course the ideal and it would be some time before units were able to completely replace their Pzkw III tanks. On 26 February 1943 the three Panzer regiments serving in North Africa were ordered to reorganise their tank battalions in accordance with the new establishments and while Panzer-Regiment 5 was to be made up of two Pzkw IV battalions, Panzer-Regiment 7 and Panzer-Regiment 8 also incorporated the remnants of schwere Panzer-Abteilungen 501 and 504 respectively as a III. Abteilung.



PANZERARMEE AFRIKA, OCTOBER-NOVEMBER 1942

After the Battle of Alam Halfa in August 1942, where the tanks of 15. Panzer-Division had failed to penetrate the British lines at El Alamein, Panzerarmee Afrika constructed a defensive line consisting of trenches and a heavily mined belt running parallel to the enemy positions with the Panzer regiments held in reserve. The month of September was largely

uneventful with the British, now commanded by Lieutenant-General Bernard Montgomery, spending most of their time preparing for a major offensive. Rommel, suffering from a liver infection and physically exhausted, returned to Germany and was replaced by General Georg Stumme. On 23 October 1942 British infantry and armoured units launched a major assault, codenamed Operation Lightfoot, along the entire front from El Alamein on the coast to the northern edge of the Qattara Depression in the south. On the following day General Stumme fell from his car during a reconnaissance of the forward positions and suffered a fatal heart attack. He was temporarily replaced by General Wilhelm von Thoma until Rommel could return to North Africa. The numbers of armoured vehicles given in the chart below are accurate for the evening of 23 October, just before the British attack began, but would change drastically as the battle developed. Similarly, the organisations, particularly the Kampfgruppen, were altered as the tactical situation demanded.

Panzerarmee Afrika

Renamed Deutsche-Italienische Panzerarmee on 25 October 1942

Deutsches Afrikakorps

15. Panzer-Division

Panzer-Regiment 8 tank strength 23 October 1942



2 x PzBefWg III



14 x PzKpfw II



43 x PzKpfw III (kurz)



44 x PzKpfw III (lang)



3 x PzKpfw IV (kurz)



15 x PzKpfw IV (lang)

Divisions-Reserve (1)

Kampfgruppe Nord (2)

Kampfgruppe Mitte (3)

Kampfgruppe Süd (4)

The situation remained fluid for the last months of 1942 and some explanation of the composition of the units mentioned here may be helpful. 1. Administered by Hauptmann Hinrichs, a division staff officer, this unit was soon depleted. 2. Formed on 23 October 1942 and commanded by Oberst Eduard Crasemann, this unit was built around elements of 115. Panzergrenadier-Regiment, Panzer-Artillerie-Regiment 33, Flak-Abteilung 617 and also contained an Italian tank battalion. The Kampfgruppe was disbanded on the following day and reformed on 3 November with the remaining tanks of Panzer-Regiment 8. 3. Formed on 23 October, this formation contained a company of Panzer-Regiment 8, elements of Panzergrenadier-Regiment 115, Panzer-Artillerie-Regiment 33 and a full Italian assault gun battalion. It was commanded by Major Schemel, an officer of Panzer-Regiment 8. 4. Commanded by Oberst Willi Tegge, this formation was formed on 23 October and contained parts of Panzergrenadier-Regiment 115, artillery units and an Italian assault gun detachment. On 2 November 1942 Oberst Tegge was killed and Hauptmann Horst-Henning Siemens, a company commander from Panzer-Regiment 8, was given command and the Kampfgruppe was rebuilt with elements of Panzer-Regiment 8 and a small number of Italian tanks. In some accounts a second Kampfgruppe Süd is mentioned but this may in fact be Kampfgruppe Fischer which was formed around Panzerjäger-Abteilung (Sfl) 605.

21. Panzer-Division

Panzer-Regiment 5 tank strength 23 October 1942



6 x PzBefWg III



19 x PzKpfw II



53 x PzKpfw III (kurz)



43 x PzKpfw III (lang)



7 x PzKpfw IV (kurz)



15 x PzKpfw IV (lang)

Kampfgruppe Pfeiffer (5)

Kampfgruppe Voss (6)

Kampfgruppe 21. Panzer-Division

5. Formed on 31 October and commanded by Major Hans Pfeiffer, this formation contained approximately half the division's serviceable armoured vehicles including self-propelled anti-tank guns and howitzers. The unit was created specifically to conduct an attack north of the El Alamein railway junction to relieve Panzergrenadier-Regiment 125 which was encircled there. The Kampfgruppe was reorganised on 13 November and was made up of just two battalions of Panzergrenadier-Regiment 104 and Pionier-Bataillon 200. 6. Made up of elements of 21. Panzer-Division and Aufklärungs-Abteilung (mot) 580 of 90. Afrika-Division. The Kampfgruppe was led by Major Friedrich Wilhelm Voss, the commander of the reconnaissance battalion.

90. Afrika-Division (7)

164. leichte Afrika-Division

Fallschirm-Brigade Ramcke

7. Just six PzKpfw III tanks from 2. Kompanie of the division's Panzer-Abteilung 190 were unloaded at Benghazi in Libya before the remainder of the battalion was diverted to Tunisia. Little is known about how these six vehicles were deployed.

X Corpo d'armata
(Italian 10th Army Corps)

17th Pavia Infantry Division

27th Brescia Infantry Division

185th Folgore Parachute Division

XX Corpo d'armata
(Italian 20th Army Corps)

132nd Ariete Armoured Division

133rd Littorio Armoured Division

101st Trieste Infantry Division (Mot)

XXI Corpo d'armata
(Italian 21st Army Corps)

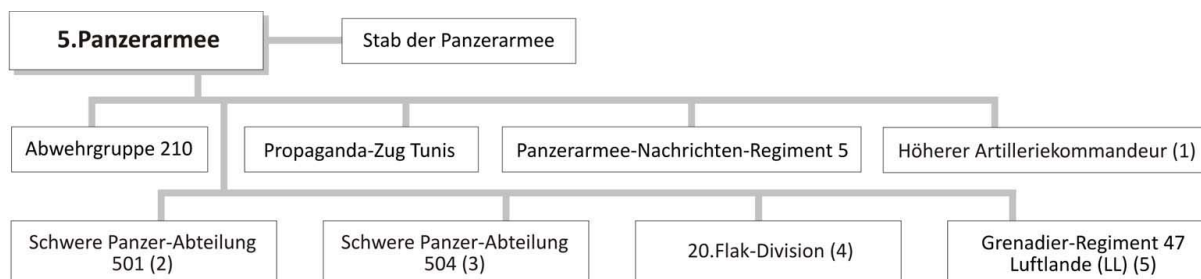
102nd Trento Infantry Division (Mot)

25th Bologna Infantry Division

5. PANZERARMEE, TUNISIA NOVEMBER 1942

This formation was created on 8 December 1942 and tasked with forming a bridgehead in Tunisia with the object of denying the strategically important shipping facilities of Bizerte and

Tunis to the Allied armies which had landed in Algeria and Morocco in the previous month. Commanded by Generaloberst Hans-Jurgen von Arnim, a veteran of the Russian Front, the German force was also tasked with maintaining a corridor in eastern Tunisia for the withdrawal of Rommel's Panzerarmee-Afrika from Cyrenaica and Libya. On 22 February 1943, 5. Panzerarmee and the units of Panzerarmee Afrika, which by that time had retreated into southern Tunisia, were combined as Heeresgruppe Afrika. I have not shown the corps structure as this was not formalised until March 1943 and was largely academic in any case.



1. The Höherer Artilleriekommandeur, or Harko, controlled the artillery assets directly subordinated to the command of 5. Panzerarmee. 2. The first elements arrived on 23 November 1942. On 26 February 1943 both companies were integrated into Panzer-Regiment 7 as the regiment's third battalion. See the chart on the following page. 3. The battalion's headquarters and 1. Kompanie arrived in North Africa in March and April 1943 with a total of twenty Tigers and twenty-four Pzkw III tanks and the establishment is examined in the chart on the following page. 4. This Luftwaffe formation was specifically created to coordinate the various Flak units which were sent to the Tunisian bridgehead. After the withdrawal of Panzerarmee Afrika the division was given control of all Luftwaffe anti-aircraft assets in North Africa. It contained two battalions of Flak-Regiment 54 and later, Stab/Flak-Regiment 78 (Flakgruppe Sousse), schwere Flak-Abteilung 372 (Flakgruppe Tunis), schwere Flak-Abteilung 503 (Flakgruppe Bizerte) and Luftnachrichten-Abteilung 140. 5. The regiment was detached from 22. Infanterie-Division (LL) in October 1942 and transferred to Tunisia and fought with Kampfgruppe Buhse. On 26 February it was integrated into 21. Panzer-Division as Panzergrenadier-Regiment 47.

90. Afrika-Division Panzer-Abteilung 190 tank strength November-December 1942



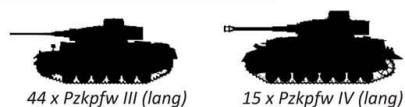
Six tanks of the battalion's 2. Kompanie were unloaded at Benghazi on 8 November 1942 but the remainder were diverted to Tunisia and arrived in the following weeks. The complete battalion is shown here. The division's Panzer-Aufklärungs-Abteilung 190 operated as part of the 5. Panzerarmee reserve.

10. Panzer-Division Panzer-Regiment 7 tank strength November-December 1942



The division's Panzer-Regiment 7, commanded by Oberst Rudolf Gerhardt, had been completely rebuilt in April 1942 with new Pzkw III and Pzkw IV tanks. The division had arrived in North Africa by 5 December 1942 but most of 5. Kompanie and 8. Kompanie were lost at sea.

Division Hermann Goring Panzer-Regiment Hermann Goring tank strength 23 October 1942



Only parts of the division operated in North Africa. Just two Pzkw III and eight Pzkw IV tanks of 3. Kompanie, Panzer-Regiment HG were present, going into action for the first time on 3 April 1943.

21. Panzer-Division Panzer-Regiment 5 tank strength 20 February 1943



The division was transferred to the direct control of 5. Panzerarmee in February 1943, prior to the creation of Heeresgruppe Afrika. The earlier organisation of this unit is shown in the chart on page 61. The Panzerbeflswagen command tanks, of which the regiment had two in late 1942, are not mentioned in any reports after December of that year. Note that almost half the vehicles shown here were in repair.

Division von Broich (6)	334. Infanterie-Division (7)	1st (Italian) Infantry Division Superga	50th (Italian) Special Brigade Giovanni Imperiali
-------------------------	------------------------------	---	---

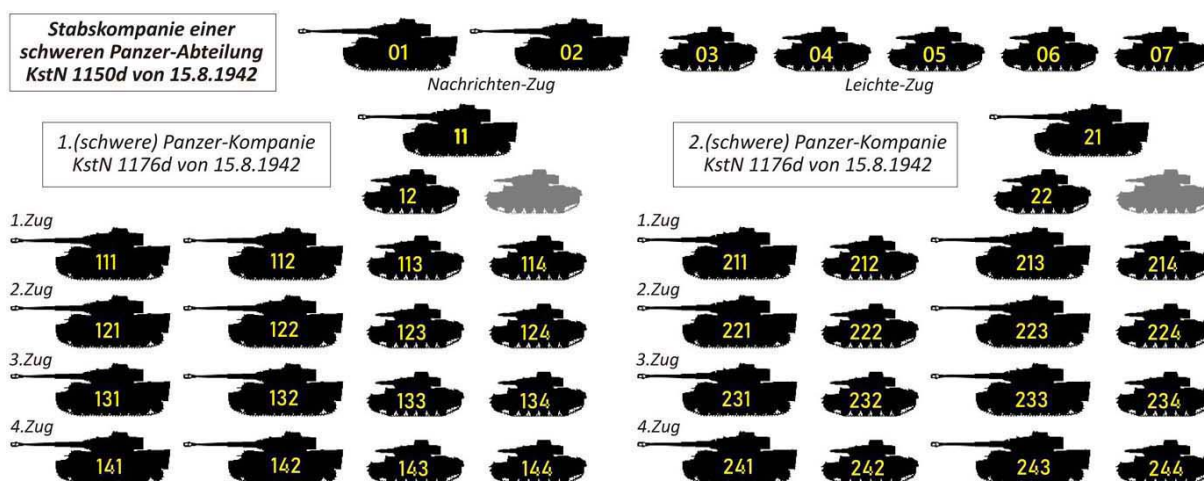
6. Set up on 11 November 1942 in Africa from Ortskommandantur II/960, the division was also known as the Schützen-Brigade von Broich and was renamed Division von Manteuffel on 11 February 1943. It went through several reorganisations and at one time contained a Nachrichten-Zug of Panzer-Abteilung 190 but was for the most part made up of Fallschirmjäger battalions and ad-hoc infantry and artillery units. 7. Formed as a standard infantry formation for service in North Africa in November 1942, this division was unusual in that it contained a regiment of Gebirgsjäger, or mountain

THE TIGER BATTALIONS, TUNISIA 1942-1943

In addition to the Panzer regiments, Pzkw III tanks were allocated to the first heavy tank units and would remain a part of their establishment until mid-1943. The tanks of both battalions that served in North Africa arrived in separate shipments and the number of vehicles on hand at any one time is the matter of some debate. Therefore, the information presented below has been compiled from contemporary documents, mostly unit records and photographic evidence, and represents the actual fighting strength and not the authorised establishment. The official allocations for the KstN mentioned here are covered in some detail in Tank Craft 10: Tiger I German Army Heavy Tank, Southern Front 1942–1945, North Africa, Sicily and Italy and Tank Craft 30: Tiger I, German Army Heavy Tank Eastern Front, 1942.

1. SCHWERE PANZER-ABTEILUNG 501, TUNISIA 1942-1943

The exact composition of this battalion, and the numbering system employed, differs in various accounts and this is explained in the unit histories section of this book. The number of Pzkw III tanks with the Stabskompanie matches the authorised allocation but the company headquarters each lack one light tank and this is shown in a lighter shade. All the light tanks were Pzkw III ausf N models.

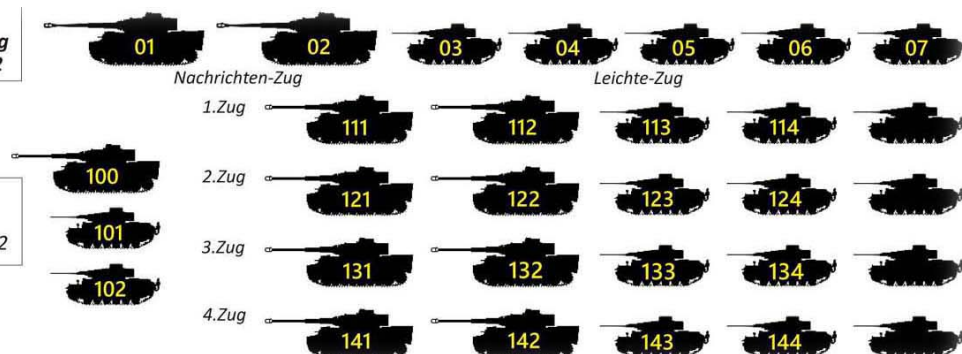


2. SCHWERE PANZER-ABTEILUNG 504. TUNISIA, FEBRUARY 1943

This battalion was formed using Stab Panzer-Abteilung KstN 1107 dated 1 November 1941 and Stabskompanie KstN 1150b of 25 April 1942 while the companies were created using schwere Panzer-Kompanie KstN 1176d dated 15 August 1942. On 17 January 1943 the battalion's organisation was revised to that shown here. Again, the Werkstatt-Kompanie has been omitted. Only the headquarters and 1. Kompanie were sent to North Africa but a number of 2. Kompanie Pzkw III tanks also accompanied them and these do not seem to have been numbered. The distribution of the latter to each platoon is speculative on my part. All the light tanks were Pzkw III ausf L with some Pzkw III ausf M versions.

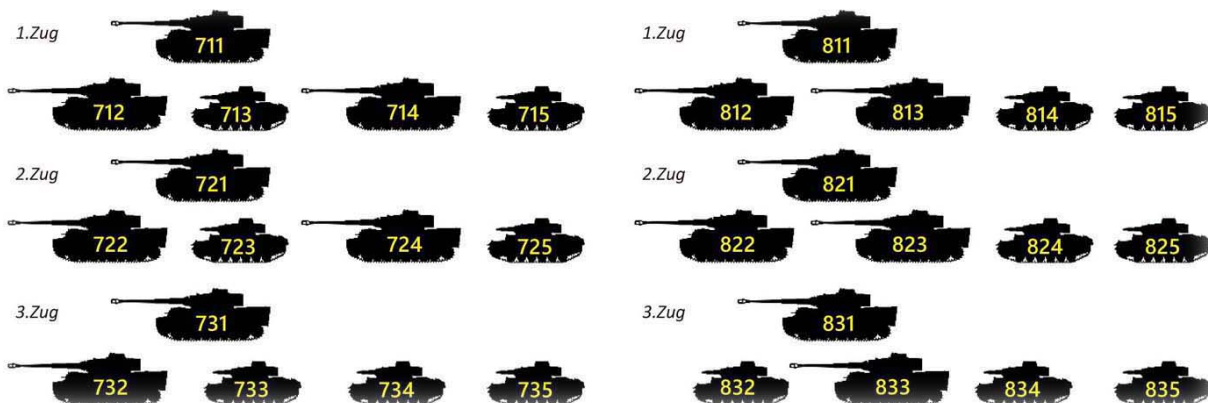
Stabskompanie einer
schweren Panzer-Abteilung
KstN 1150d von 15.8.1942

1.(schwere)
Panzer-Kompanie
KstN 1176d von 15.12.1942



3. 7. KOMPANIE AND 8. KOMPANIE, PANZER-REGIMENT 7. TUNISIA, MARCH 1943

On 26 February 1943 the remaining tanks of schwere Panzer-Abteilung 501 were incorporated into Panzer-Regiment 7 of 10. Panzer-Division as the regiment's seventh and eighth companies. The turret numbers were altered as shown here but were applied in the same style and size and, in the case of 8. Kompanie, repeated on the rear surface of the turret stowage box. Most tanks probably retained the last two digits of their original number, for example Tiger 823 was previously numbered 223, but this was not always the case as Tiger 724 has been identified as the former 112. The organisation of 3. Zug, 8. Kompanie is confirmed by photographic evidence.



Dragon Models Ltd
B1-10/F., 603-609 Castle Peak Rd,
Kong Nam Industrial Building,
Tsuen Wan, N. T., Hong Kong
www.dragon-models.com

Tamiya Inc
Shizuoka City, Japan
www.tamiya.com

First To Fight
ul. Jana Bulhaka 11,
01-472, Warszawa,
Poland
www.wrzesien1939.pl/

Miniart
144 B Kharkivske Highway,
02091 Kiev,
Ukraine
www.miniart-models.com

Panzerart
Ul. Borowa 7,
41-260 Slakow,
Poland
www.panzerart.pl

Royal Model
Via E. Montale, 19-95030,
Pedara, Italy
www.royalmodel.com

Italeri S.p.A.
via Pradazzo 6/b,
40012 Calderara di Reno, Bologna, Italy
www.italeri.com

Rye Field Model
www.ryefield-model.com

OB Grigorov
www.snop.okbgrigorov.com

Passion Models
This Japanese company is affiliated with MS Models Japan.
www.passionmodels.jp

Hauler

Jan Sobotka,
Moravská 38, 620 00 Brno,
Czech Republic

www.hauler.cz

Voyager

Room 501, No.411 4th Village,
SPCJinshan District, Shanghai 200540,
P.R. China

www.voyagermodel.com

Griffon Model

Suite 501, Bldg 01, 418 Middle Longpan Rd,
Nanjing, P.R. China

www.griffonmodel.com

Aber

ul. Jalowcowa 15, 40-750 Katowice, Poland

www.aber.net.pl

E.T. Model

www.etmodeller.com

Friulmodel

H 8142. Urhida, Nefelejcs u. 2., Hungary

www.friulmodel.hu

Modelkasten

Chiyoda-ku Kanda, Nishiki-Cho I-7, Tokyo, Japan

www.modelkasten.com

Very difficult to navigate but worthwhile.

Black Dog

Petr Polanka,

Letecká 549,

Libcice nad Vltavou, 252 66,

Czech Republic

www.blackdog.cz

Spade Ace Models

This company may have closed but the tracks are available from Sincere Hobby in Hong Kong.

www.sincerehobby.com

Eduard Model Accessories

Mirova 170, 435 21 Obrnice,

Czech Republic
www.eduard.com

Master Club
www.masterclub.ru

It appears that this firm is closely associated with Armour35, a Russian mail-order firm.

RB Model
Powstancow Wlkp.29B,
64-360 Zbaszyn,
Poland
www.rbmodel.com

Zvezda (Zvezda-America)
www.zvezda-usa.com

Note that the Russian catalogue is not the same as the US version.

OzArmour
P.O Box 51,
Burpengary, QLD, 4505,
Australia
www.ozarmour.com.au

Kaizen
Like many Chinese companies this is hard to pin down to an exact location. The tracks are Available from MS Models Japan, a firm for Which I can personally vouch.
[Www.msmodelswebshop.jp](http://www.msmodelswebshop.jp)

Attack Hobby Kits
Kodymova 2539/8
158 00 Prague 5, Czech Republic
www.attack-kits.eu

JK Resin
This Czech company does not have an online store but their products are available in Europe and the UK from Tracks-n-Troops.
Www.tracks-n-troops.eu

In writing this book, and the complementary volume, I referred extensively to the Panzer Tracts series of books created by the late Thomas L. Jentz and Hilary Louis Doyle. These booklets were compiled from original plans and factory drawings and official documents and contain a wealth of technical data. The somewhat dated Achtung Panzer No 2 Panzerkampfwagen III edited by Hiroshi Ichimura is still

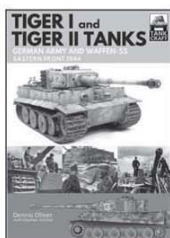
worthwhile and the brilliant illustrations of Mitsuru Bitoh and Tomioka Yoshikatsu make this book a handy guide despite the captions being, for the most part, in Japanese. There are some small errors, mostly regarding the classification of the different variants. More specialised works included *Panzers In The Sand: The History of Panzer-Regiment 5* by Bernd Hartmann, *Panzer Regiment 8 in World War II: Poland, France, North Africa* by Kevin Fish and *Deutsche Afrika Korps 1941-1943* by Ricardo Recio Cardona. Two very interesting titles, unfortunately only available in German, are *Brückenkopf Tunis: Kriegsschauplatz Mittelmeerraum und Nordafrika* by Dieter Handrich and *Unter der glühenden Sonne Afrikas Soldaten des Afrika-Feldzuges 1941-1943* by Alois Sclee. Lawrence Patterson's *Fallschirm Panzer Division Hermann Göring* contains a lengthy passage on the elements of the division that took part in the Tunisian battles which is usually ignored in histories of this formation. Another invaluable resource is Thomas Jentz's *Panzertruppen* books, which I would recommend to any reader with an interest in German armour of the Second World War period. I should also acknowledge the work of The Crusader Project which provided information on vehicle allocations and I would like to thank the modellers who graciously allowed me to publish the images of their work. I must make special mention of Jan Zdiarsky from Eduard Model Accessories, Freddie Leung of Dragon Models and the crew at E.T. Models who are always ready to help. As always, I am indebted to Karl Berne, Valeri Polokov and J. Howard Parker for their invaluable assistance with the photographs and period insignia.



A Pzkw III ausfJ of 1.Kompanie, Panzer-Regiment 5 photographed in early 1943 in Tunisia. The terrain here, so unlike the deserts of Egypt and Libya, is characterised by rolling hills and olive groves. This tank, numbered 112, is examined on page 24 of the Camouflage & Markings section of this book.



The aim of these innovative series is to provide modelmakers and enthusiasts with a new standard of primarily visual reference to both the full-size vehicles and their models, using detailed line drawings, plans and photographs, many in full colour. Each book is devoted to a famous military vehicle – chosen for its popularity as a modelling subject – but will range from main battle tanks to 4x4s.



Tiger I and Tiger II: Tanks of the German Army and Waffen-SS
Eastern Front 1944

Sherman Tanks of the British Army and Royal Marines
Normandy Campaign 1944

Panther Tanks
Germany Army and Waffen SS, Normandy Campaign 1944

Churchill Tanks
British Army, North-West Europe 1944–45

Panzer IV
1939–1945

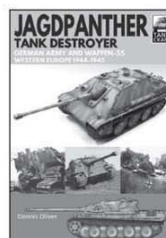
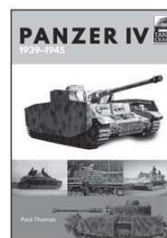
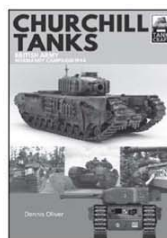
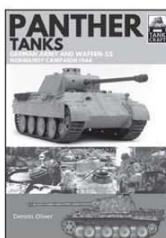
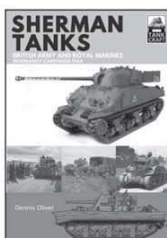
Jagdpanser Tank Destroyer
German Army and Waffen-SS, Western Europe 1944–1945

Panzer I & II
Blueprint for Blitzkrieg 1933–1941

T-34
Russia's Armoured Spearhead

Tiger I
German Army Heavy Tank, Southern Front, North Africa, Sicily and Italy, 1942–1945

Cromwell and Centaur Tanks
British Army and Royal Marines, North-west Europe 1944–1945



Centurion
Armoured Hero of Post-War Tank Battles

Sherman Tanks, US Army, North-Western Europe, 1944–1945

Tiger I and Tiger II Tanks, German Army and Waffen-SS, The Last Battles in the West, 1945

T-54/55
Soviet Cold War Main Battle Tank

Tank Destroyer
Achilles and M10, British Army Anti-Tank Units, Western Europe, 1944–1945

Panther Tanks: Germany Army and Waffen-SS
Defence of the West, 1945

Chieftain
British Cold War Main Battle Tank

Stug III and IV
German Army, Waffen-SS and Luftwaffe, Western Front, 1944–1945

Challenger 1
British Main Battle Tank of the Gulf War

Tiger I – German Army Heavy Tank
Eastern Front, Summer 1943

M1 Abrams
The US's Main Battle Tank in American and Foreign Service, 1981–2019

M48 Patton
American Post-war Main Battle Tank

Panther Tanks: German Army Panzer Brigades
Western and Eastern Fronts, 1944–1945

Panzer III: German Army Light Tank
Operation Barbarossa 1941

Challenger 2
British Main Battle Tank of the Gulf War

Leopard 2
NATO's First Line of Defence, 1979–2020

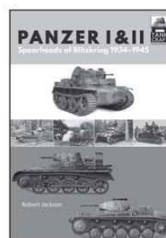
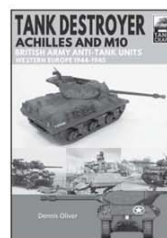
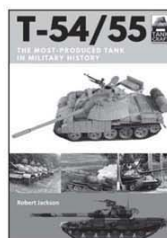
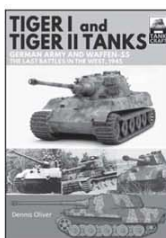
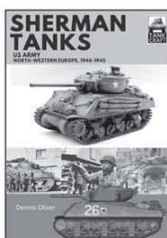
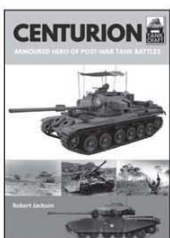
Tiger I & Tiger II Tanks
German Army and Waffen-SS Normandy Campaign 1944

Jagdpanser IV: German Army and Waffen-SS Tank Destroyers
Western Front, 1944–1945

Tiger I and Tiger II Tanks
German Army and Waffen-SS The Last Battles in the East, 1945

Panther Medium Tank
IV. SS-Panzerkorps Eastern Front, 1944

Hetzer – Jagdpanser 38 Tank Destroyer
German Army and Waffen-SS Western Front, 1944–1945



A wide range of kits and accessories attests to the long-standing popularity of these military vehicles as modelling subjects, while significant differences between different variants offers opportunities to 'individualize' models. as is so well illustrated

...the significant differences between ancient remains and opportunities to manufacture models, as is seen in the
in these books by many archive and modern photographs.